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Number 72

June 1990

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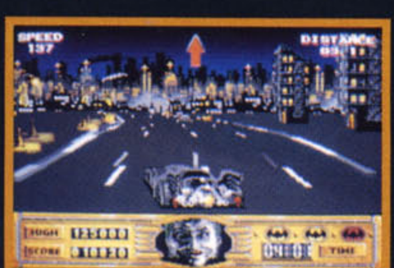
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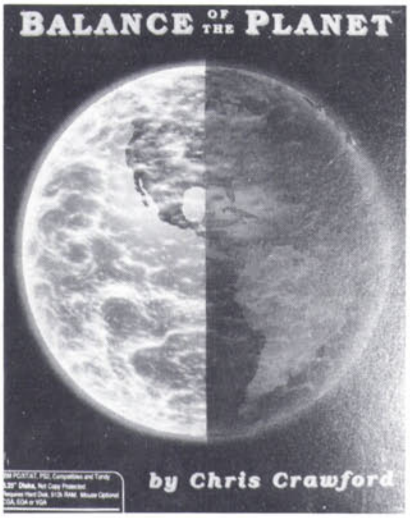
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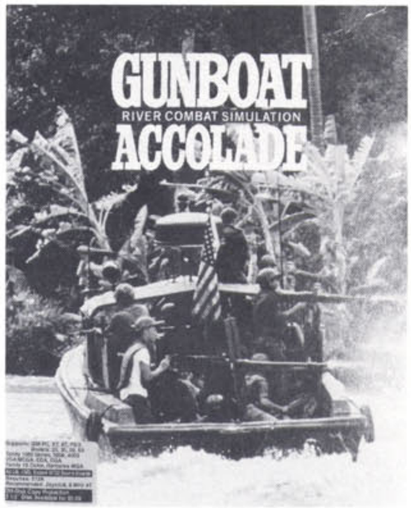
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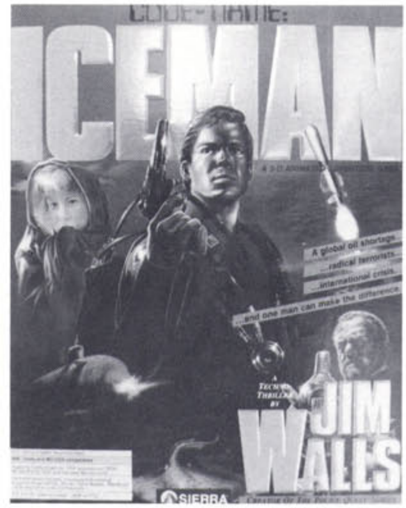
June 1990 **Number 72**



Balance of the Planet/pg 19



Gunboat/pg 30



Code-Name: Iceman/pg 48

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD (ISSN 074-667) is published monthly by Golden Empire Publications, Inc., 515 S. Harbor Blvd., Suite B, Anaheim, CA 92805. Second Class Postage Paid at Anaheim CA 92803 and additional mailing offices. Permit #672-910

Postmaster: Send address changes to Computer Gaming World, P.O. Box 4566, Anaheim, CA 92803-4666.
The subscription rate for twelve issues (one year) is $24.00. Canadian and foreign surface subscriptions add $11.00. Foreign air subscriptions are $74.00 per year. All payments must be in U.S. dollars, made by check drawn upon a U.S. bank, Visa, Master Card, or money order.

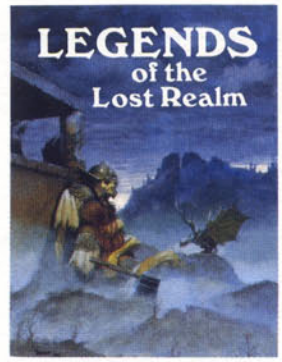
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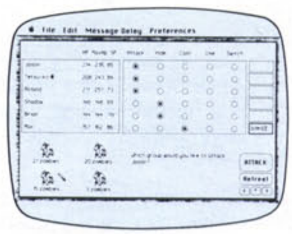
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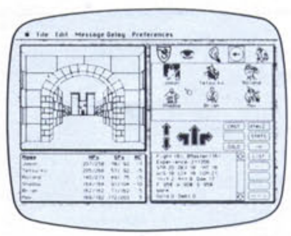


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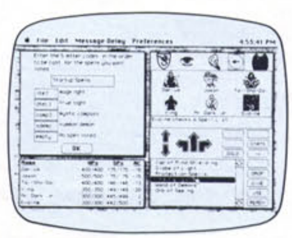


Enemy Abilities: While many enemies will simply attack, some will instead choose to steal a prized possession or two from you. Others will cast deadly spells, while still others leave you feeling quite ill (or worse). Some will change shape in the middle of a battle, and some will be quite immune to many of your charms (and weapons). Some will develop a split personality if attacked the wrongway, and still others can only be vanquished with a specific weapon. AND you won't have to go looking for the enemy—just wait around and they'll come to you. Some will track you by the amount of noise you make, others will literally sniff you out, and still others have the patience to simply hide and wait. Of course, only a few are above attacking from behind.



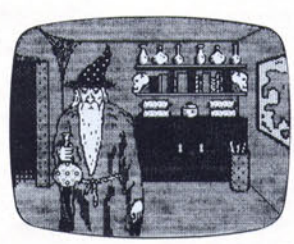
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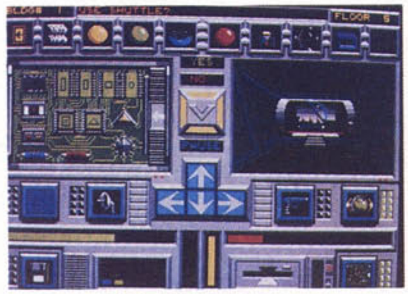
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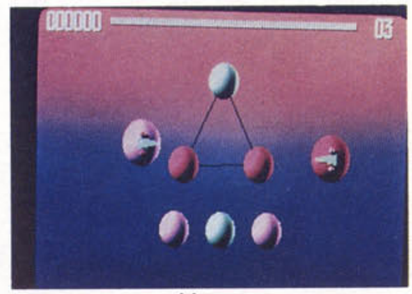
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DAY OF THE VIPER: The Sun League (the futuristic galactic defence alliance, not baseball's spring training) is in bad shape, and you are its only hope. It seems that Gar, the mechanoid monster, and his minions have threatened to destroy all living organisms. Since you are predisposed in favor of organic life (being of that persuasion), your task is to maneuver around the 25 floors of a space station, seeking out critical floppies to install and upload back to home base. The point and click interface couldn't be easier. The movement perspective is point-of-view. Auto-mapping, auto-inventory and area scans help keep things moving along and instant object identification helps players understand the pieces of the puzzle. "Day of the Viper" adds thought to a run-and-shoot game. Atari ST and Amiga ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

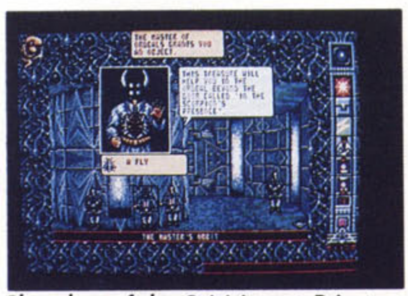
HARMONY: When they say you are challenged to *relax* while playing this game,


Day of the Viper


Harmony


Power Drift


Wolfpack


Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess


North & South

they aren't kidding about the challenging part. Being taught stress management through playing "Harmony" is like being taught to swim by being throw into a pool full of piranhas. Pushing the video balls of like colors together (before they explode, mind you!) while avoiding collisions with different colored balls (otherwise, collisions generate new, third color balls that start ticking away) is the gist of the game. Until the next harmonic convergence, *orb it* with "Harmony"! C-64/128 ($29.95); Amiga, IBM ($44.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Activision
P.O. Box 3048
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POWER DRIFT: This conversion of SEGA's coin-op arcade game plays pretty true to form. Players race along at break neck speeds through five different roller-coaster tracks. Rest assured, however, that the one with the joystick will not be the only nut loose behind the wheel (the competition is pretty wild). C-64 ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

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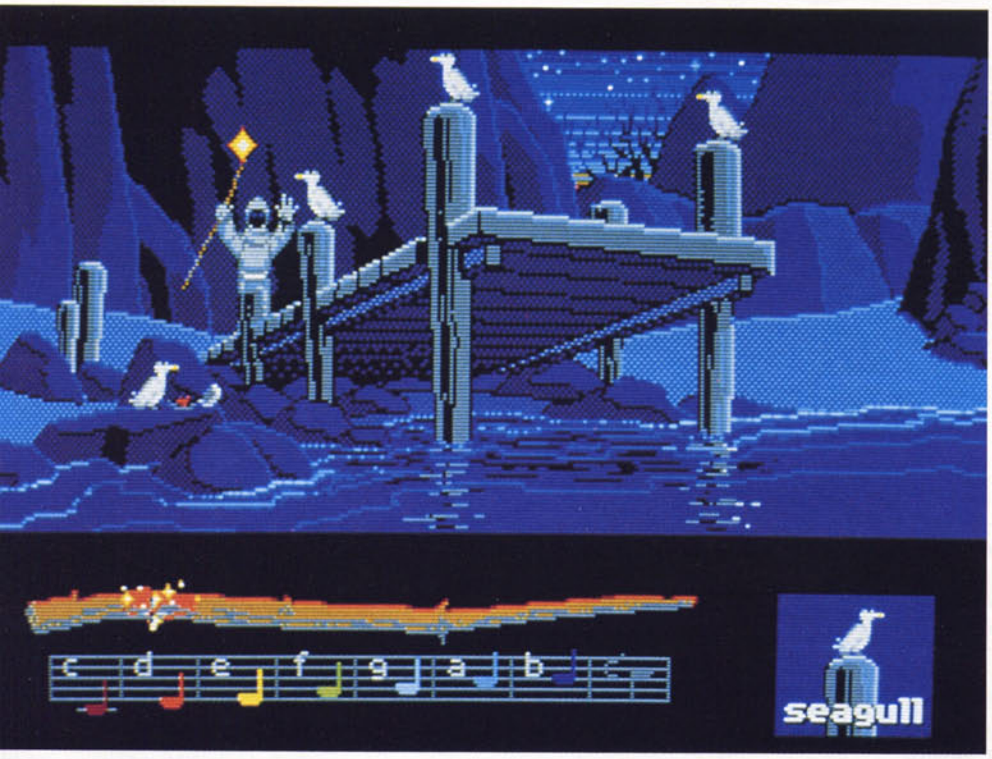
WOLFPACK: From the heft of the box (and the price tag), one would expect another top-of-the-line submarine simulator. Instead of the strategy/wargame simulation expected, "Wolfpack" delivers more of a strategy/arcade game (meaning the game is not as *deep*—forgive the pun). It does, however, have the distinct advantage of letting players play either the surface ship or the submarine. "Wolfpack" is really something to look at (with 256 color VGA and lots of sound support), but it is something else again to play. Care to take a dive? IBM ($54.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

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CHAMBER OF THE SCI-MUTANT PRIESTESS: This game is well-constructed. It generates a healthy exercise in adventure/puzzle solving and players

Continued on page 75

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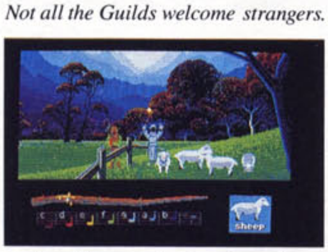
The game is fantasy. The interface is magic.

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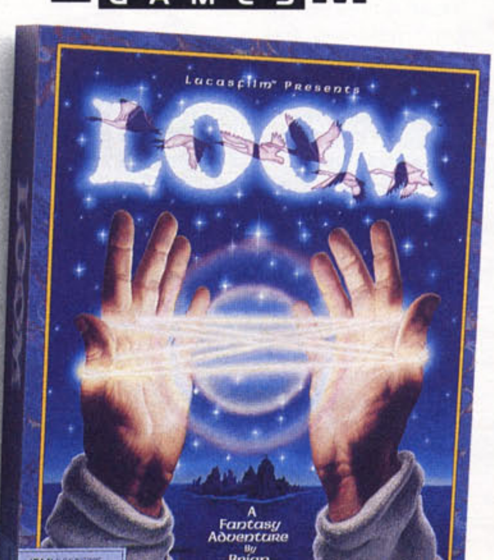
Loom is more than a masterpiece of fantasy storytelling. With *Loom,* Lucasfilm™ Games literally redefines the fantasy computer game experience. Simple point n' click actions move your character, select objects, and perform magic. No cumbersome keystrokes, text parsing, maze mapping, or inventory management intrude to break the spell.

We even transport you to the Age of the Great Guilds before you turn on the computer. With a lavishly produced, 30-minute drama on Dolby® Stereo audio cassette that's included with the game. Recorded by Lucasfilm's Academy Award-winning Sprocket Systems, it introduces the characters and sets the scene for the impending, epic struggle against imposing odds.

Then it's full immersion into *Loom*'s 3-Dimensional, scrolling panoramic landscape. Where detailed animation, high definition graphics, startling special effects and stirring musical score combine to create a total environment. Captivating you from the opening scene to the final climax.

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It *Can* Happen Here

by Johnny L. Wilson

Although Nobel Prize-winning novelist Sinclair Lewis is probably best known for *Main Street, Babbitt, Elmer Gantry* and *Arrowsmith*, my personal favorites are *It Can't Happen Here* and *Kingsblood Royal*. The latter is an ironic narrative in which an individual who suffers from racial prejudice toward the black population discovers, through genealogical research, that he himself has black ancestors. The protagonist experienced a life-changing discovery that enabled Lewis to preach a gospel of civil rights to his readership.

The former is, perhaps, Lewis' most lengthy novel and it tells how a radio evangelist was able to use the issues of morality and national security to forge a popular mandate and create a fascist dictatorship in the United States. As Lewis showed how patriotic symbolism could be distorted by a power-hungry elite and religious fervor channeled into a political movement, I was personally shaken. As a high school student, reading this novel for the first time, I suddenly realized what Lewis intended for his readers to realize, "it" (a dictatorship) really *can* happen here. There is an infintessimally fine line between protecting the interests of society and encumbering the freedoms of that self-same society in the name of that protection.

Now, it appears that the civil liberties of game designers and gamers themselves are to be assaulted in the name of protecting society. In recent months, two unrelated events have taken place which must give us pause: the raiding of **Steve Jackson Games**' offices by the United States Secret Service and the introduction of A.B. 3280 into the California State Assembly by Assemblyperson Tanner.

On March 1, 1990, **Steve Jackson Games** (a small pen-and-paper game company) was raided by agents of the United States Secret Service. The raid was allegedly part of an investigation into data piracy and was, apparently, related to the latest game supplement from **SJG** entitled, *GURPS Cyberpunk* (GURPS stands for Generic Universal Role-Playing System). *GURPS Cyberpunk* features rules for a game universe analogous to the dark futures of George Alec Effinger (*When Gravity Fails*), William Gibson (*Neuromancer*), Norman Spinrad (*Little Heroes*), Bruce Sterling (*Islands in the Net*), and Walter Jon Williams (*Hardwired*).

GURPS Cyberpunk features character skills related to breaking into networks and phreaking (abusing the telephone system). Hence, certain federal agents are reported to have made several disparaging remarks about the game rules being a "handbook for computer crime". In the course of the raid (reported to have been conducted under the authority of an unsigned photocopy of a warrant; at least, such was the only warrant which was shown to the employees at Steve Jackson Games), significant destruction allegedly occurred. A footlocker, as well as exterior storage units and cartons, were deliberately forced open, even though an employee with appropriate keys was present and available to lend assistance. In addition, the materials confiscated included: two computers, an HP Laserjet II printer, a variety of computer cards and parts, and an assortment of commercial software. In all, **Steve Jackson Games** estimates that approximately $10,000 worth of computer hardware and software was confiscated.

The amorphous nature of the raid is what is most frightening to me. Does this raid indicate that those who operate bulletin board systems as individuals are at risk for similar raids if someone posts "hacking" information on their computer or does it indicate that "games" which involve "hacking" are subject to searches and seizures by the federal government? Does it indicate that "writing" about "hacking" exposes one to the risk of a raid? It seems that this raid goes over the line of protecting society and has, instead, violated the freedom of its citizenry. Further facts may indicate that this is not the case, but the first impression strongly indicates an abuse of freedom.

Then, there is the case of California's A.B. 3280 which would forbid the depiction of any alcohol or tobacco package or container in any video game intended primarily for use by minors. The bill makes no distinction between positive or negative depiction of alcohol or tobacco; does not specify what primarily designed for minors means; and defines video game in such a way that coin-ops, dedicated game machines and computer games can all fit within the category.

Now, the law is, admittedly, intended to help curb the use and abuse of alcohol and tobacco among minors. Yet, the broad stroke of the brush with which it is written limits the dramatic license which can be used to make even desirable points in computer games. For example, Chris Crawford's *Balance of the Planet* depicts a liquor bottle on a trash heap as part of a screen talking about the garbage problem. Does this encourage alcohol abuse? In *Wasteland*, one of the encounters involves two winos in an alley. Does their use of homemade white lightning commend it to any minors that might be playing the game?

One of the problems with legislating art is that art is designed to both reflect and cast new light and new perspectives on life. As such, depiction of any aspect of life may be appropriate, *in context*. Unfortunately for those who want to use the law as a means of enforcing morality, laws cannot be written to cover every context.

We urge our California readers to oppose A.B. 3280 and help defend our basic freedoms. We urge all of our readers to be on the alert for any governmental intervention that threatens our freedom of expression. "It" not only *can* happen here, but "it" is very likely to if we are not careful. **CGW**

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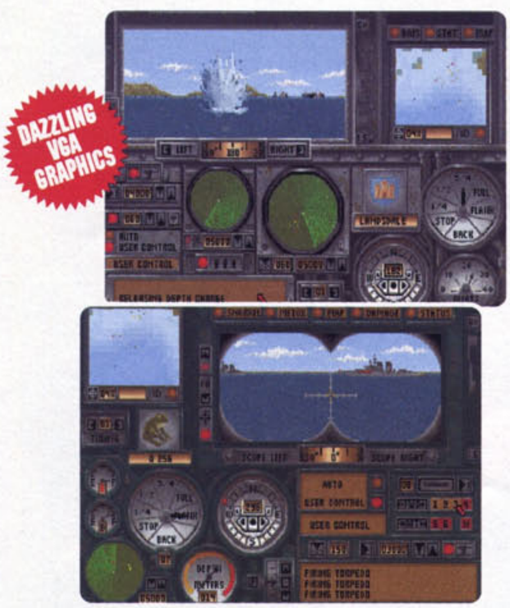
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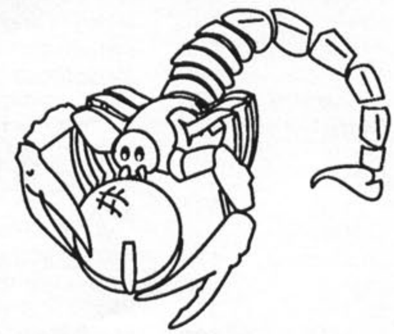
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Scorpion's View

"Ultima VI" As Viewed By Scorpia



Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to be able to provide this forum for her distinctive and, sometimes, controversial perspective.

Looking into my crystal ball, I see . . . I see . . . hmmm . . . I see it needs dusting again. Well, living in a cave does have its disadvantages occasionally. No matter. I don't need a crystal ball to tell your future. You're off to Britannia once more (as if you hadn't already guessed).

Sitting in your refurbished living room, watching some dismal TV program, is hardly the life of an Avatar. So, naturally, when a strange storm comes out of nowhere, off you go to the little ring of stones. What else could this be but the usual summons from Lord British?

Of course, the red moongate that rises may give you pause for thought, but adventurers rarely pause for that. So, off you go through the gate. In no time at all, you're tied down to a sacrificial altar, surrounded by a small army of Gargoyles who are anxious to rip out your heart. There's nothing like imminent death to really capture your attention.

Fortunately for you, your old buddies Iolo, Shamino, and Dupre pop in through another gate and stave off the Gargoyles long enough to get you out of there and into Lord British's throne room. Whew! Some calls are a little too close for comfort.

After dispatching the few Gargoyles that slipped in before the gate closed, you learn what's gone wrong in the land this time. Mainly, it's those Gargoyles. No one is sure where they come from, what they're up to (besides no good, of course), or why they have taken over the shrines of virtue. Lord British himself doesn't much care. *He* just wants you to get rid of them.

Simple, eh? Maybe just a little too simple. There is certainly more here than



meets the eye and the smart Avatar won't go into the matter with preconceived notions. Out-of-hand slaughter will not provide the solution. A lot of information (from Britannia and elsewhere) will have to be uncovered before the true answer is found.

I had some very profound, mixed feelings about this game. After five Ultimas of established style and pattern, this one came as a shock. Even knowing in advance it would be different was not enough to prepare me for it. Gone were the old alphabet-long list of commands, the familiar interface, the graphics I had come to know so well.

In their place were a small set of streamlined commands, a completely new interface, a "one size fits all" world, and graphics so totally different that I had to look at the box again to be sure this *was* an Ultima. It took me, in fact, several days to become used to it all.

Every character in the party is now visible on the screen at all times, completely and clearly delineated, in a sort of three-quarter, down-the-front view. Roads meander into and through towns at one end and out the other. You know you're in one when buildings start to show up on the screen.

The wilderness is more detailed than ever before and gives a better feeling of being outdoors than any previous Ultima. Part of this comes from the enlarged graphics and part from seeing the occasional deer, field mouse, rabbit or snake going by.

Interiors are also larger, to stay in proportion with the rest of the world. Houses, shops, cellars, etc., tend to be quite roomy. Dungeons are, likewise, of giant proportions, although they don't go down as far as in previous games (perhaps, just as well) since four levels seems to be the maximum depth.

Just about any object in the game can be taken, moved, or manipulated, whether it's a pair of pliers or a grandfather clock, and there are a lot of items out there. While you won't need most of them for anything, the ability to work with them is another part of the "real world" feel of the game.

Each person you can talk to has a separate, unique face graphic that comes

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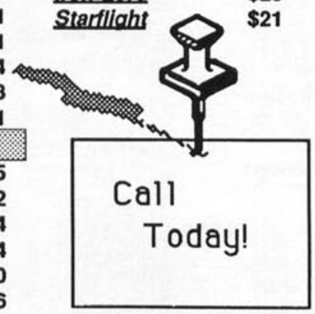
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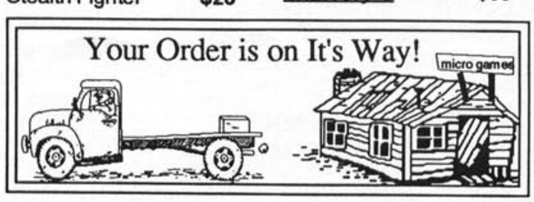
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Circle Reader Service #45

The Rumor Bag

by F. Walker Rosenberg



In Los Angeles, they turn down the thermostat in the U. S. District Court chambers to a brisk temperature and the gray stone facades on the walls convey an ambiance which suggests that one has already been convicted and incarcerated. At least, I felt that way as the Feds led me in handcuffed and sat me at the defendent's table.

"Nothing to worry about," said my attorney, "they have to prove you stole those secrets and they've got a very weak case."

As the trial started, the prosecution accused me of, not only, stealing industry secrets (I like to call it being alert), but also of endangering national security. A steely-eyed federal agent was their first witness. He claimed that I had leaked the story about Larry Holland's *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, **Lucasfilm**'s sequel to *Their Finest Hour*, planned for Christmas, 1990. He acted like the information on the celebrated "Batwing" and ME-262 on the German side, as well as P-38, P-51 Mustang and other pursuit planes on the Allied side, was still classified. Well, you never know with the government, but I do know that the game will be using a full 256 color palette in the game.

He further stated that they had gotten suspicious of me when an informer overheard me say something about my familiarity with a *Soviet Pilot*. Why should they be alarmed? I was only talking about **Electronic Arts**' next flight simulator, tentatively scheduled for Fall release.

My attorney began to grill the agent more thoroughly during the cross-examination. It turned out the steely-eyed agent also had an affinity for those steel marbles. He continuously rolled some of them in his hand as he answered my lawyer's questions. "I proved he knew the secret code," he muttered, "he knew about 'monkey island.' I searched his hard disk." My lawyer asked him if he might mean a reference to **Lucasfilm**'s *The Secret of Monkey Island*, Ron Gilbert's upcoming graphic adventure game about pirates using the latest version of the *Maniac Mansion* interface.

The agent rolled the marbles together faster. "Then, how would he have known the countersign, 'savage empire'?" he questioned, "He had to have meant the Soviet Union. We're not talking fantasy, here!" The marbles clicked together even faster when my attorney suggested that *Savage Empire* was going to be the first release in the *Worlds of Ultima* series from **Origin**. He seemed unconvinced as he was presented with documents indicating that the moongates used in *Ultima* lead to other places in the multiverse. In *Savage Empire*, adventurers find themselves in a world of prehistoric monsters. He wasn't even convinced by the fact that *Ultima* characters like Iolo and Shamino will make cameo appearances in the new game.

"I proved he knew the code," the agent shouted, "he even knew about Project Quasar!" Project Quasar? My attorney leaned over and whispered as we conferred quietly together.

"My client," announced my "mouthpiece" to the court, "suggests that you may be referring to **Virgin Mastertronic**'s *Quasar*, a real-time game of space conquest which stresses both resource management and military strategy. Is it not possible that you are speaking of an Amiga game which is currently under development?"

"Objection," thundered the prosecution, "Counsel is leading the witness in an attempt to suggest that every bit of evidence against his client is related to computer games. No one can possibly be this immersed in such a silly hobby."

The witness was excused and the case continued with frequent recesses so that the judge could consider various motions in his chambers and so that we could quaff a few bottles of mineral water. There was one of those coin-op hockey games in the cafeteria and I challenged my counsel to a game. I beat him easily and hoped this wasn't an omen regarding his courtroom performance. I told him not to worry about the game. After all, it wasn't a real simulation like *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* or that real detailed game under development in Canada. It seems that **Strategy First**, a Canadian developer, has been researching an NHL simulation for a couple of years and is still shopping it about the industry.

My lawyer admitted that he didn't usually play such games. He read science fiction and had flown a couple of flight simulators, but he just hadn't found what he was looking for, yet. I suggested that Chris Roberts' *Squadron: The Space Combat Simulator* from **Origin** might be just what he wanted. It is supposed to involve teamwork and cooperation, as well as individual pilot skill.

When the hearing resumed, the prosecution rested their case. The government's attorney had a wicked little smile on his face as he did so. My attorney immediately called me to the stand and asked me what I thought of the proceedings. I told him that they were unreal. In fact, I told him that the charges were also unreal and went on to state that the entire thing reminded me of an upcoming game called *Unreal* which will be released by **UbiSoft**, the French software company, later this year. I didn't even have a chance to say that the action game would have great graphics and offer some very interesting physical puzzles before the prosecution thundered a loud, "Objection!"

In fact, he didn't even have a chance to explain his objection before the judge ruled, "Sustained! Witness is directed to answer the questions only and refrain from wasting the court's time with information with no bearing on the case."

My testimony continued and the time for cross-examination arrived. I finally found out why the government's attorney had smiled earlier. "Mr. Rosenberg," he began, "do you *really* expect this court to believe that all of these incriminating references relate to computer games?" I stated that the references *were* to computer games. "In that case," he continued, "explain to us how a recent telephone call could have used the term warmonger to refer to computer games."

I explained it as well as I could. *Warmonger* was a game due out in late summer from **Bullfrog** (developers of *Populous*) and **Electronic Arts**. It is a strategy game which uses realistic graphics to depict the player as leader of a primitive tribe which has just invaded unfamiliar territory. The player must balance the need for food versus the need for defense (guns or butter?) and the game can be played by up to four players via direct connection.

Fortunately, the judge found me "Not Guilty", but I get the impression that there are now more "bugs" in my office than those you find in beta versions of computer games. **CGW**

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SIERRA TAKES A NOT-SO-SERIOUS STAB AT FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING...



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Hero's Quest players tell us how it is...

'Just got HQ yesterday and am very pleased...some of the humor is priceless.

'...this one has more humor than most CRPG's I've played!'

'The fairies were a riot! Great characterizations in this game, better even than Space Quest III, and that's going some.'

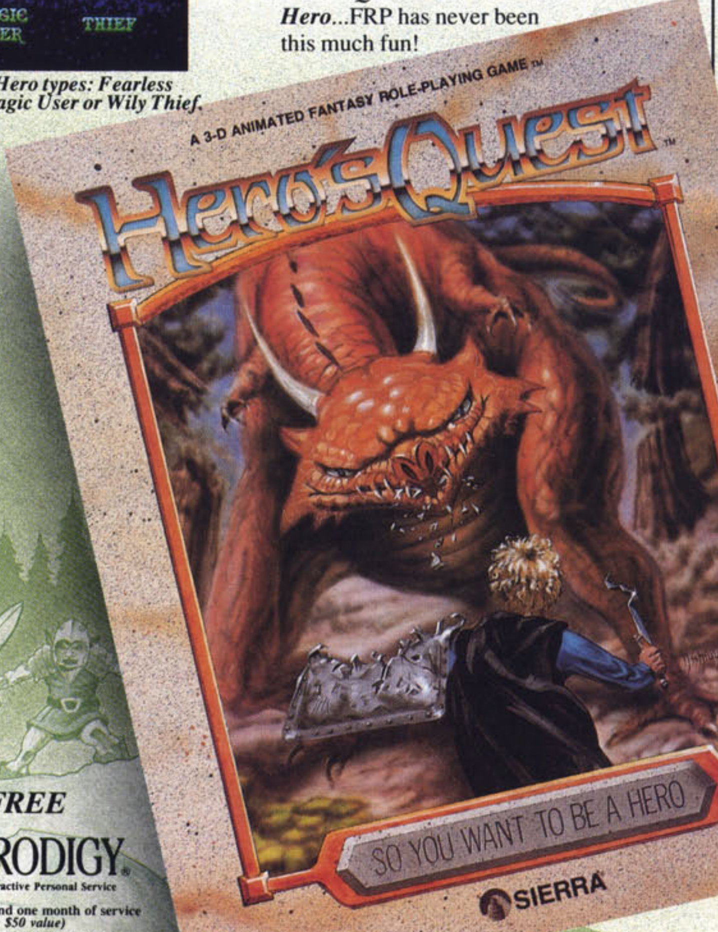
'...much of the humor is a great deal more subtle...the sub thing brought me right out of my chair.'

'I like that ending a lot!!! I want to go back and replay...SOON!

'...one of the best of all of Sierra Games...I play the game every chance I get. I highly recommend it to anyone who likes games by Sierra.'

'We can't wait to play HQ II!! Sierra is getting too good at this stuff. It's getting to the darn point where no other computer games are worth buying. Keep it up...just make MORE games.'

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With Their New Multi-Player Family Game And First Game With VGA Graphics, Sierra Is Not Only

Keeping Up With Jones

But Trying To Forge Ahead

by Johnny L. Wilson



In order to peer into **Sierra**'s immediate future, it may be necessary to visit the past. Remember those days of old when only governments and huge corporations had computers? Many families would gather together in the evenings to play boardgames like *Careers*, *Money, Money, Money* and *The Game of Life*. There was a sense of togetherness, competition and cooperation.

Keeping Up With Jones (*Jones*) is a computerized tribute to those family games of old with *lots* of new twists. Where the traditional boardgames were driven strictly by chance, *Jones* is driven by player-customized goals, a dynamic economic system with both micro-economic and macro-economic effects simulated, and logical decision-making. It is further enhanced by a "racetrack" style game board which has the rich feeling of an oil painting, digitized animation to enliven some of the turn results, as well as random events, and a musical soundtrack that offers distinctive themes for each location and character.

The Secret of Your Success (Game Play)

Jones is a game for one to four players (including computer players) in which each player defines his/her own particular idea of success. Before the game actually begins, players are presented with definitions (in game terms) of success in terms of: Career, Education, Happiness and Money. Players set their individual goals and attempt to be the first player to reach their goals.

On the first player turn, the player has the option of enrolling in school or entering directly into the work force. The game features nine different work locations, each with its own organizational structure and "pecking order" of prestige and power. One can move up at each location by virtue of performance, education and ability. There are also nine different educational institutions to attend which can affect one's chances of "getting ahead" or provide new challenges for those who make Education their primary goal.



During each turn, the player makes time management decisions about how he or she will spend their week. One simply moves to the right location on the game board, clicks on the location to reveal a menu of options, clicks to choose all the options to be performed at that location for the game week, and moves to the next location to repeat the procedure until the game clock (a dynamic icon located at the bottom of the screen which looks like a clock and turns red as time is expended) runs out. Players go to school and/or work, purchase necessities and luxuries, invest in securities and, once in a while, relax. Players who don't take the time to relax face two potential problems: illness or a visit from "Wild Willy the Burglar".

Along the road to success, salaries, prices and investments will fluctuate according to a micro-economy within the game itself. However, this micro-economy is affected by such macro events as a Wall St. scandal or oil crisis. The player learns of such events by purchasing a newspaper. Then, news concerning major events is flashed upon the screen via the typical '40s and '50s cinematic approach of having a newspaper spin around and around until it comes to rest and allows the viewer/player to read the headline. About three-fourths of the way through production, there were already more than 50 newspaper screens available and more were expected.

Although the economy seems fairly simple to keep track of in the course of the game, it functions in a fairly sophisticated way. There is a wage-price spiral in operation and the decisions which the players make in the course of a game actually affect what is happening in the micro-economy. Further, the newspaper headlines offer hints about what should be purchased in the way of investments. The boardgames of old could not "chain" economic/game factors together the way a computer game can and *Jones* exploits this ability in creating a more realistic economic environment.

In short, the game presents plenty of decision points for each player in a simple, playable game. Players try to balance time and money against possible purchases, investments and satisfaction. The game ends when one of the players reaches the goals he/she set at the beginning of the game. The game was designed to be anywhere from an hour to three hours in length. Since game length depends on the goals which the player set, one must set lower goals in order to have a shorter game.

Sound Investment (Artistic Touches)

In addition to the lavish use of digitization in *Keeping Up With Jones*, Sierra has invested quality resources in the musical soundtrack. Ken Allen has written a musical score that offers musical variety, establishes the "Yuppie" atmosphere the game is designed to portray and offers some terrific musical puns, as well.

The theme song to *Jones* has the light bouncing rhythm one would expect to hear for the opening of a situation comedy. It also has an organ part that is reminiscent of The Doors in order to place the game context in the right generation. Each player will have a different musical theme that will play as they stroll around the game board (It will even be personalized and selected by the player if the design team can find enough room on the disks.) and, in turn, each location has its own theme. The investment broker's theme is performed in a baroque style like the hornpipe from Handel's "Water Music" (Get it, "Baroquer"?); the unemployment office has telephone percussion in its theme; the clothing store gets some great vibraphone work to indicate how cool it is to wear their clothes; the pawn shop's theme expresses ambivalent feelings and the fast food restaurant gets Barry Manilow-style orchestration that builds up to the expected chord



change (I guess the composer needed a break, that day!). All of which combines to enhance the gaming experience with a sense of humor and whimsy.

In addition to the musical score, the graphic presentation of the game is rather fascinating. Most of the static graphics were painted in a similar style to the game board and digitized into the game. The game board itself is a lavish painting, as are many of the static items. The characters are animated from live models and the animation itself is incredibly smooth.

That *Jones*, Sierra's first VGA product, offers a rich tapestry of artistic touches should not be surprising, however. The producer of the project is Bill Davis, an Emmy award-winner for the



graphics used on *NBC: The First 50 Years*. He is also the professional computer artist who handled the switches from animation to live footage and back again for a popular Toyota commercial nearly one year ago. Now, he is guiding a team of artists, musicians, programmers and designers in creating a game which they hope will capture more of the family market than any computer game has done previously.



How I Made My Fortune (History of the Game)

The history of *Jones* is somewhat fascinating. Sierra does not usually purchase game designs developed outside their studios. When the company's executives saw an EGA version of *Keeping Up With Jones* that only had a portion of the present game's framework, they got very excited about the game's potential. They even booted up the simple EGA version and tested it out on some couples who came over for dinner. When everyone who looked at the game got hooked on it, Sierra knew it had a potential winner.

Still, the EGA version was not ready for prime time. It offered neither commercially viable graphics nor the more flexible gameplay of the current version. So, Sierra decided to buy *Jones*



lock, stock and barrel. They put Warren Schwader, designer of *Hoyle's Book of Games: Volume 1*, on the project, and teamed him with Bill Davis and Bill Skirvin. In addition, Sierra CEO Ken Williams has been very involved with *Jones* from the beginning.

The Future's So Bright . . .

Sierra has been so successful in creating graphic adventures that many of their competitors refer to their own efforts in graphic adventures as "a Sierra-style product." Now, the successful publisher is beginning to take some creative risks in product types. *Keeping Up With Jones* is part of the commitment. After seeing this game, one really catches Ken Williams' vision of interactive entertainment for *everyone*.

CGW

Fits And Chips

by
Intrepid Media Critic, Dennis Owens



I dunno how this R.I.D. stuff works...

I've been after Johnny or Chris or *somebody* to tell me how games are picked to be rated each issue. No luck, though. I'm beginning to suspect they have one of those little fuzzy-ball dartboards set up somewhere—right next to the dusty boxes of *Computer Game Forum* still stacked in the back room—and it has all the names of the games stuck in velcro on it or something.

Each month I dutifully sit down and try to figure out how it was I rated each game the previous month... Let's see, did I give *Ultima V* an "A-" or an "A"? *Penguins of Quendor*!? What kind of game is that?? Why haven't they rated *Ultima VI*, yet? The stores around here have had it for weeks!

What's going on over there at *CGW*? Someone testing Huxley's hypothesis and have a bunch of monkeys around there trying to write the entire works of Shakespeare?

You'd think with my "connections" there I'd be able to find out. Maybe I could even get a review copy of *Ultima VI* while I was at it.

No way.

I called the CGW secret phone number one day (only given out to those who've found *all* the solutions to *Wizardry IV*) to find out the scoop, but no luck.

Chris blamed Evan; Evan blamed Johnny. Johnny said, "Oh, Russ keeps all the really neat software. It's, like, a publisher's perk, you know, dude." (I think Johnny's been in California too long—he's starting to "go native").

I'm beginning to think that Russ is really an AI program, though. I mean, who's really seen that guy, anyway?

Show of hands?

Of course, everything would make sense if Russ is the one deciding which games get put into the R.I.D. rating section, wouldn't it? Maybe there's a bug in the AI and... No. That's too scary to think about.

I've been hearing about these computer studies of Chaos Systems. (Mostly for the military).

And, hey, wait a minute, there *have* been a lot of reviews lately for military games, haven't there?

Check out the Editorial in the May issue. In fact, the May issue covered everything from battling from a dragon's back to fighting M-1 tanks!

Hey! I'm on to something! The *real* funding source behind CGW must be—snrk. Mmfff. Pnntt.

[Ed: It is not the role of the editorial staff to comment on policy; we carry out policy. The current line of investigation and mindless speculation will only be permitted to proceed if it avoids sensitive matters.]

Okay, okay. So there have been reviews of military games as long as there's been a CGW. This *still* supports my point, though, because—owwWWW! Hey! The arm doesn't bend that way, buddy!

All right, already!

Changing the subject!

Sheesh!

I'm outta' here!

It's off to my local software shop ("Bub's"). I was there recently—as I am wont to do from time to time—just to browse, to talk games, to smell the shrink wrapping, and, while Bub and I were marveling about Hero's Quest I on the Amiga and other hot new titles, Bub mentioned that a new store was opening down the street.

Now, Bub knows me (unlike Russ, I've *seen* Bub). I keep Bub's children in braces with my purchases so that he doesn't mind if I occasionally go scope out a new scene. So, I hotfooted it over there and scanned out the situation, talked to this greasy-haired, pale-skinned skinny dude who seemed to think he was the manager, just to find out what the action would be.

I asked him typical questions. Do you know anything about *Breach 2*? What have you heard about military subsidies of computer game magazines? Do you have a cluebook for *Dragon Wars*? That kind of thing. (No smart-alecky comments here, either. So I use cluebooks, too. So what? Who do you think I am, Scorpia?)

Anyway, I was just kicking into my usual pitch for CGW (I'm not one of the magazine's salespeople, but I should get a commission as I pitch this mag so much). The guy gave some bogus answer for why they won't carry magazines, and, suddenly, I latched on to what he was all about.

Slyly—because I'd just been playing it that afternoon—I asked him, "Do you know anything about *The Keys to Maramon*?" (I hadn't seen it on his shelves).

His pale forehead crinkled as he forged quickly into his banal, unscripted patter. "Oh, it's not out yet," he said. Bad breath. "There's no release date yet. You know how companies like to advertise before their product's ready."

"Hmm. Okay. Thanks." I turned around. Walked out. Vowed never to darken that door again (at least, not until I'm desperate).

What is it that makes these salesmen either not know what they're talking about or else not have the brains to simply admit that their distributors are slower than a magic missile spell against 60 orcs on an 8088 machine? I don't know. It's probably related to the great Illuminati plot to control the Wall Street Military Industrial Complex in this country.

Seeking answers, I read Psalm 9:1-2 (as indicated among all that small print in the CGW masthead). Well, it says nothing at all there about the military. It's more about thanking the Lord and exulting and being glad.

Although, when you get to verse *three*: "when my enemies turned back, they stumbled and perished before thee."

Oh, ho! The truth again! It will be told!! I *knew* there was a connection between the military and...

Ip! Erg! Ack!

Gakkk! . . .

Whew, when I finally reached CGW on a secure line, I *did* talk to Russ. Or, at least, a voice claiming to be Russ'.

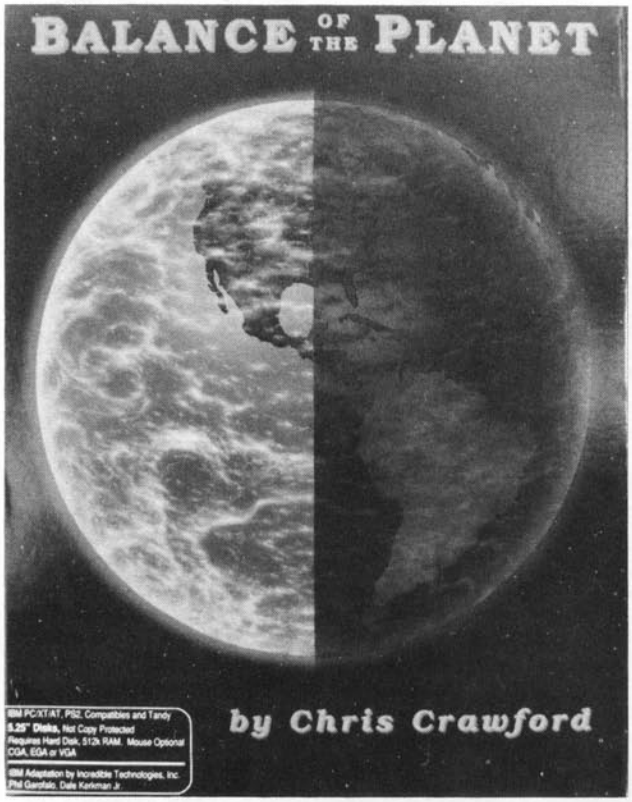
They can digitize those things, you know.

It *might've* even been an *Ad Lib* board!

Piloting Spaceship Earth

Chris Crawford's "Balance of the Planet"

by Chris Lombardi



How many times have we heard computer games extolled by game designers for their artistic merit and consciousness-altering potential? "We are artists," they say. "We can change the world with our artistic medium, we can move mountains!" they say. "Hrump!" most of us say, and get right back to shooting down "Krauts" or hacking up trolls.

Rarely does someone put their game where their mouth is. Yet, Chris Crawford (designer, editor, organizer of this and that, as well as the most loved/hated man in the game design biz) has designed his latest game, *Balance of the Planet*, around the hottest social issue to take hold of the American consciousness in quite a while.

Balance of the Planet is a simulation of the environmental crisis. It covers the whole mess, from recycling and acid rain to oil spills, global warming, world starvation, and the third world's standard of living. The entire morass of complex, interrelated issues is heaped upon the player in the ultimate test of management skills, the ironman of crisis management.

In the fictional world of Balance of the Planet, the United Nations has awakened to the fact that the world is in trouble and, as a result, has created a position called High Commissioner of the Environment. The player holds this dubious title, a title which carries a lot of weight. With the title comes the power to levy taxes on all environmentally damaging activities and then, subsidize activities which may benefit the simulated ecology. For example, as High Commissioner, the player may choose to tax the crud(e) out of oil use and use the revenues to subsidize solar energy research. With this power, the player has 40 years (8 game turns) to slam the brakes on civilization's environmentally destructive slide and return the planet to a more balanced state.

The Method Behind The Madness

Balance of the Planet consists of 150 graphic screens, each associated with one of the game's 150 formulas. Each of the screens contains a warm, cute illustration of the issue represented by the formula, along with a bar graph depicting the change in the formula's value over time. For instance, the Acid Rain screen contains a picture of little imps throwing pitchforks down from the clouds and the global temperature screen is a schematic illustrating the greenhouse effect as it warms a frowning, sweating caricature of the earth. The graphics are not outstanding, but their cartoonish simplicity serves to buffer the otherwise intimidating gravity and complexity of the topics. Unfortunately, the IBM graphics are a straight port of the Macintosh graphics, apparently colorized in the style of Ted Turner's controversial studio.

TITLE:	Balance of the Planet
SYSTEMS:	IBM, Macintosh(II)
REVIEWED:	Macintosh
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Chris Crawford
DISTRIBUTOR:	Accolade San Jose, CA

Each of these screens also lists the variables *influencing* the specific formula as well as the variables *influenced by* it. For instance, the Starvation screen lists world population and food supply as its cause, and forest clearing, overgrazing, population, and starvation points as its effects. Clicking on any of these key words will call up the corresponding screen. In this way, the player can trace through the myriad of cause and effect relationships in order to understand and master them. Macintosh users will probably find the interface to be somewhat Hyper-textish.

Understanding Interconnectedness

Understanding these interconnected relationships is the key to success and is the heart of the game. They are not always obvious. For instance, a common game strategy is to tax the life out of fossil fuel use in order to reduce its damaging effects. Nevertheless, the energy provided by fossil fuels is absolutely vital to industry. Industry produces consumer goods that keep "first-world" folks happy, as well as manufacturing the fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery that feed "third-world" folks. A blind attack on industry may disrupt the economy such that Canadians may have to live without VCRs, but Angolans have to survive without dinner. A well-intentioned act of ecological preservation may turn the world economy upside down.

Here lies the game's message. This is not a green radical's attack on industry. Nor is it an optimistic industrialist's attempt to debunk the warnings of environmental doomsayers. It is one insightful man's interpretation of the environmental crisis presented as equitably as possible. In order to be successful, the player must walk the thin line between satisfying the voracious appetite of the world economy with the preservation of our dying ecosystem.

Of course, there are biases. But Crawford handles the issue of bias by placing

Continued on page 73

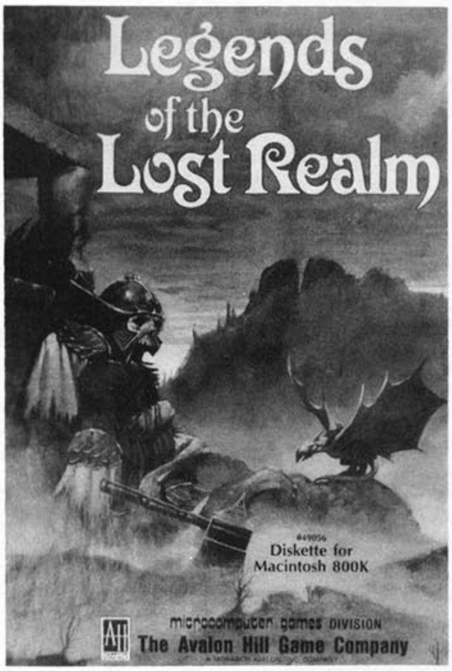
Legends of the Lost Realm

Avalon Hill's Macintosh Role-Playing Game

by Dennis Owens

Thus has the Messenger spoken: "The high King returns. The faithful are summoned to Taris-Cirinik, the sorcerer's stronghold. The heroes of the New Age shall arise and their fury shall cleanse the land of the evil Malokor."

The summonings are bold and the words filled with hope. In a land where hope has long since faded, however, who shall have the courage to answer?



Legends of the Lost Realm is a slam-bang adventure role-playing game for the Macintosh, a challenge for the most dedicated player, and a promising beginning for what, apparently (and hopefully), will be a long line of CRPGs set in the fictional land of Tagor-Dal, a place of magic, fear, monsters, and great good.

Not designed for beginners, *Legends* is fully playable on any Mac with at least one 800K drive and one MEG of memory. Its graphics, though sparse, are sharp and well drawn. The fiction base of the story—if this, indeed, is just the beginning of a long saga—is believable and well textured.

Subtitled "The Gathering of Heroes," *Legends* is set in the King's stronghold, an ancient but still thriving castle only recently taken back by the forces of those who believe in the line of the High Kings. Stuffed with rogues, unscrupulous adventurers, and enough other nasties to fill the tales of many a long evening spent relaxing by a campfire, the stronghold's towers and dungeons are loaded with goodies and treasure-seekers, strange drafts, visions, and mini-quests.

TITLE:	Legends of the Lost Realm
SYSTEM:	Macintosh
PRICE:	$39.95
DESIGNERS:	David Cooke and Charles Collins
PUBLISHERS:	Avalon Hill Baltimore, MD

Though the castle's streets seem oddly vacant (a function of the game's graphics, to be discussed in a moment), they are, nonetheless, crowded with bamboozlers, thieves, and braggarts who would just as soon pick your party's pockets or accept a bribe as fight or talk.

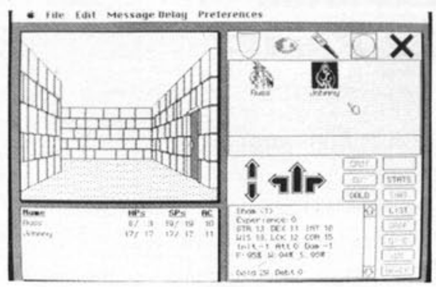
Exploring is done in a 3-D perspective with a party of one to six characters. The bad news is that except when the party enters a store or combat begins, the graphics are plain and unpopulated by character images. Enemy parties cannot be seen before their square is stepped on and encounters present tiny but detailed views of the opposing forces. The good news is that views and basic information about the player's party are always on-screen and more detailed information is but a mouse-click away.

Interaction in stores is carried out by pointing at an object and clicking to pull down a menu. Another command will tell about an object and still another will identify which type of character could best use it.

Classes and attributes, with a few exceptions, are all fairly standard. Characters may begin as any of four basic classes, but each class has subclasses with their own specialities: blade master, monk, ninja, witch, wizard, etc. All characters have, at least, some type of spell or non-magical skill. From "light campfire" to "snare animals," they lend a delightful suspension of disbelief beyond many CRPGs. Multi-classes and class changes are also an aspect of *Legends of the Lost Realm*.

Magic is both plentiful, simply named, and easy to use. Spells can either be cast, loaded into scrolls and wands to be cast later, or even created (once the user has become powerful enough, of course). However, an advance in experience level, though it *does* include an increase in spell points available to each character, does *not necessarily* mean an advance in spells known. Magicians, for instance, must reach the fourth rank before learning second-level spells.

Make no mistake: although *Legends of the Lost Realm* may seem, at least in summary, to be a standard whomp-the-monster/explore-the-streets CRPG, the changes it offers in the way in which adventuring *occurs* make the game's fiction



soar far beyond the depth and excitement most have come to expect in computer role-playing games.

The ability to buy on credit (and to extend one's financial resources too far); to sharpen swords using whetstones; to bank money; to carry canteens, bread, jerky, bandages, rope, string, and on and on; to fashion arrows out of feathers, sticks and bits of metal; to climb walls, and then, using rope, to pull up the rest of the party; to fill scrolls and wands with spells which can be used later; to hunt for food—all these and many more characteristics make *Legends of the Lost Realm* a sophisticated challenge for the best-qualified computer adventurers.

Complaints are few, but noteworthy. The beginning of the early versions of *Might and Magic* is **nothing** compared to the difficulty of getting a party started in *Legends*. Party members can die off even before the second encounter.

Even more maddening is that, once characters die (at least, in the early going) they cannot be revived; and, to delete them from the roster, they must be buried (which costs each surviving member precious gold). Survivors may find themselves in debt even before they have done much more than bury their fallen comrades!

Another problem is that the game lacks a sophisticated save/restore feature. Characters can be saved in two ways: either in the barracks (which is frequently inconvenient) or by quitting the game and saving the party. Then, to restore the

group, the user must either choose "preferred group" under the Preferences menu or "restore" in the barracks.

Sounds simple, except that levels are often reset each time the game is turned back on and the barracks, because of the limitation of each character's need for water, food, and sleep, often seem much farther away than they should be. A simpler save/restore system would *much* enhance the game.

Also, though the manual is crammed with important information, much is left out, too. For example, it does not delineate at what rate water and food are consumed, how to behave properly in temples, etc. Later in the game, such information becomes intuitive, but it would have seemed to have been most useful at the beginning, when characters are dropping like flies.

The sparseness of the graphics seems especially odd in a Macintosh game. One wonders if it was really necessary to limit the graphics this much in order to add the appreciated details to the role-playing system.

Finally, in what must be one of the truly most inane additions to a CRPG ever, *Legends of the Lost Realm* sports a tax man. He hangs out close to the barracks and, unless the party has banked most of its gold before coming home (not always an easy proposition), he **will** take most of it away! That's preposterous!

Still, despite its problems, *Legends of the Lost Realm* is a fascinating, complex, and rewarding gaming experience. It is a must buy for all Mac users who are desperately waiting for role-playing games and intricate adventures. **CGW**

Legends of the Victorious Realms (Hints)

To minimize the problems of getting started, back up files 3, 4, 6, and 7 under the "LoLRM" folder to a saved-game file as soon as each satisfactory character is created. Back up those files, also, after each satisfactory game session is completed.

One possible starting strategy is to create a party made of three fighters, two shaman and a magician. All of the back characters will be able to use bows and arrows and, once the party has strengthened a little bit, one of the fighters may be replaced with a thief.

Food and water are a must. Many an unprepared adventurer has starved or died of thirst while exploring the castle. In fact, parties should stay away from the towers until the party has advanced a few levels, then begin in the tower in the Northeast. Don't forget to take rope, a lantern, and reserves of food, oil and water on those trips to the towers. Also, try to use homing sticks to get in and out of towers quickly.

At the early levels, run away from all encounters with magic-users. Also, rest the party whenever their sleep levels reach 50%. Take turns standing guard until everyone has had at least 6 hours sleep.

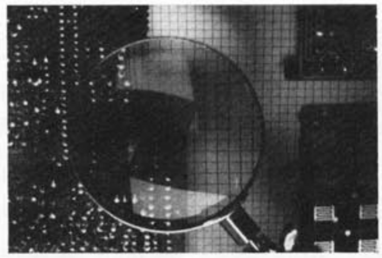
Circle Reader Service #58

Circle Reader Service #57

Circle Reader Service #40

The Circuit Writer

Why is it so hard to add boards to your computer anyway?



by Steve Witzel

Steve Witzel was leader of the team that designed the award winning RealSound technology for Access Software and is an occasional columnist in CGW.

So, you finally decided to unload your old CGA card, upgrade to, at least, EGA in order to check out some of the 16 color games. May you *not* experience what I did.

Another Fine Mess

The other day a friend added some new boards to his computer, which required that he swap graphics cards with me. Being somewhat of a congenial sort, I agreed. What could be easier than to remove the single phelps head screw holding my case together (the other four screws have been missing in action for a number of months) and swap EGA cards? Little did I realize the atrocity that was about to follow.

After installing the new graphics card, replacing the case and single screw, reconnecting the monitor and mouse, and turning on the computer, everything was back to normal. At least everything *appeared* normal. It wasn't until the night before my daughter's big report was due and I was headed for bed that screams emanated from the library (where the computer resides) informing me that the computer wouldn't print. "Someone must have disconnected the printer cable," I thought, "this is just a one minute fix."

After 30 minutes with no noises spewing forth from the printer, it was time to get the screwdriver. The new printer card came with a built in printer port and there was already an existing printer port in the computer. A simple fix, I'll just reassign the printer port on the new graphics card to be LPT2. This will eliminate the internal conflict and allow my daughter to print her report. After 15 minutes of searching for the manual for the EGA card (it didn't take long to find because it was in the house less than a week) and reading about the printer port, it became obvious that trouble was following me. The printer port was LPT1 and could not be changed, disconnected, or mutilated!

I still had hope of getting the document printed; little did I know. Just change the printer port on the multi-function card, I thought to myself, and everything will be back to normal. If I make the original printer port LPT2 and connect the printer to the EGA card, everything should work (Are you following this?). This time the search for the manual took much longer because the multi-function board has been installed for almost a year. Apparently the force was with me because I found it. A quick search of the text (obviously translated) revealed that this was a SMART card and it would automatically look to see if LPT1 was in use. If it was in use, the SMART multi-function card would reassign its' printer port to become LPT2. Somewhere along the line the EGA card didn't bother to tell the SMART multi-function card that it was using LPT1, hence both cards were assigned to LPT1 and neither would print.

The solution became obvious. All I had to do was wake up my friend, rip his computer apart, get my card back and have my daughter print her report.

My Telecomputing Experience

With the proliferation of multi-player on-line games and point-to-point modem games, you may eventually run into another problem. A few months ago, I decided to install a modem in my computer at home. A modem has been sitting in a box at the top of my closet since 1200 Baud modems came on the market. Needless to say, the instructions have long since vaporized. My SMART multi-function board is using COM1 and COM2 for normal serial ports. All that needed to be done is to change COM1 to COM4 on the multi-function card and to assign the newly found modem to COM1 and pulse dialing. The modem was an easy project, it took only *two* evenings to try all possible combinations of the 6 jumper blocks (about 150 possible combinations).

It took only *two* evenings to do a job that should have taken 10 minutes. Who designs these cards anyway? I have come to the conclusion that all circuit board designers belong to the same religion. The common belief among them is that if they identify the function of even one jumper on the board itself, their soul will be damned for all eternity (what other reason could there be???).

At the office, we are constantly upgrading pieces of computers. As the old equipment accumulates we tend to move memory cards, hard drives, graphics, modems, disk drives and anything else that can be found to other computers. The manuals for these motherboards and the plug in cards usually get lost. I'd rather attend a funeral than attempt to figure out which jumper does what. It is a painful and time-consuming process. Some boards cannot even coexist in the same computer. Our TARGA graphics board can't reside in the same computer as the recently acquired WORM (write once, read many optical disk) drive. It took most of an afternoon to figure that one out.

What Can We Do?

As consumers we must speak up. Let computer manufacturers know that we demand plug in cards that CONFIGURE THEMSELVES. The technology has been available for a long time. Why should we be frustrated every time we want to add new functions to our computers? Let the computer designers be frustrated in figuring out a standard that will make our lives easier!

CONGRATULATIONS!

At the recent Software Publishers Association Convention, **Access Software** was awarded the SPA's *Technical Achievement* award for the the development of *RealSound*, a digitized sound system that requires no additional hardware. Since I was intimately involved in the development of RealSound I would like to express my thanks to all the programmers who helped on the project—you know who you are.

NEXT TIME: , What's happening in CD-ROM **CGW**

Tips On Avoiding Frustration

Make it easy on yourself. Right now, there are things that will help you in the future as you grow your computer.

1. Use Labels

Label all connectors—LPT1, COM2, etc. It is amazing how quickly I forget if the mouse is in COM2 or COM4.

2. Secure Manuals

Put copies of all board documentation *inside* the case. Be careful not to block any vent holes. Next time you need to alter something all the information is right there.

3. Fail Safe

Somewhere on the board, write the name of the dealer where the board was purchased. If all else fails, maybe the dealer will help.



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Game Technology for the Near and Far Future

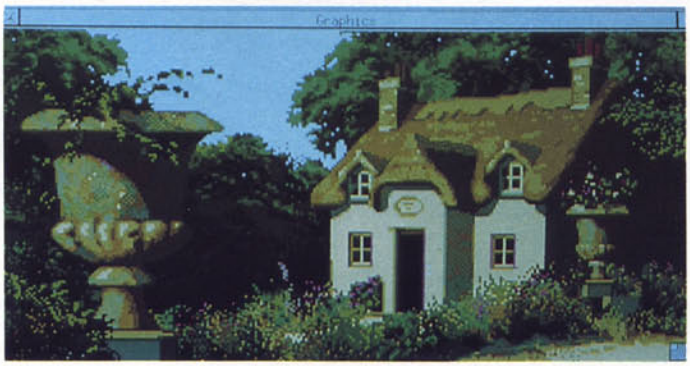
by Johnny L. Wilson

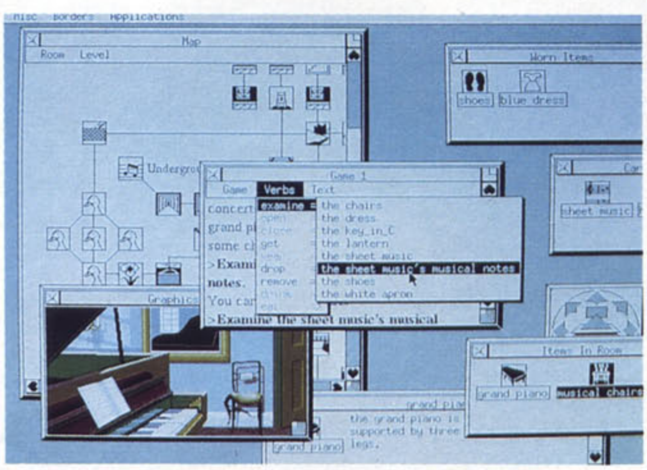
In journalism, one is forever tempted to follow the doctrinaire wisdom of whatever axiom happens to be quoted the most at the "A" list parties. Being the sort who tends to merge into the fringes of conversations as anonymously as Lamont Cranston becoming invisible in the shadows of the underworld, this editor hears an incredible amount of doomsaying. "CD-I can't cut it" (Oh? We were impressed with the CD-I products under development which we saw at the SPA Spring Symposium.); "NEC's *TurboGrafx 16* doesn't have a chance" (Tell that to the 120,000 plus who have already purchased the machines, as well as those who will purchase them when their CD-ROM unit becomes available.); "Disk-based entertainment is dead" (We believe there will always be a market, because disk-based software purchasers are the most stable customers in the computer entertainment marketplace.); "DV-I will never become affordable" (We've noticed that the basic price of the chip set has been dropping dramatically over the past 12 months.); and "Text adventure games will never sell in today's market" are all comments which are bandied about in today's climate. They are *not*, however, propositions that this editor or this magazine necessarily agree with, but they are being presented within the industry nonetheless.

Hi-Tech Text Games (Near Future Tech)

Of course, having heard the grave pronouncement that "Text adventure games will never sell in today's market", we were understandably skeptical when **Virgin Mastertronic** told us that they were about to announce a new design that would revolutionize text adventure games. Still, we became rather more interested and still more curious when we were told that Anita Sinclair's **Magnetic Scrolls** was developing the product. Since Magnetic Scrolls had produced previous products with high-quality pull-down art screens (*Guild of Thieves* and *Jinxter*, for example), they just *might* have a new twist on the genre.

What Anita showed us of *Wonderland*, a "text adventure" game based on the Rev. Charles Dodgson's weird and wonderful stories, causes us to rethink the industry's axiom. First of all, the game is neither *strictly* a text adventure nor can it be described as a graphic adventure. It is its own genre. Using a windowing system which Magnetic Scrolls has been developing for over two and a half years, the game uses multi-tasking to offer an incredible array of features.





Take graphics, for example. The graphics are not only high-resolution EGA, VGA or Super VGA pictures, but many of them feature animation, as well. In addition, one does not have to pull-down a full-screen painting as would have been the case in *Guild of Thieves*, but can call up the graphic and size the frame anywhere on the screen, even as text is scrolling elsewhere on the screen. In fact, players will even have the option of zooming in on particular portions of the animated screens as the action is going on.

Second, there are some major changes in the way text is handled. To be sure, one can even change the size and nature of the font in which the story is printed (as one could do in **ICOM**'s *Macadventure* series), but one can also size the text window and place it wherever desired. This makes it easy to call up the auto-mapping feature, compass feature, or graphics windows. In addition, one can use the windows like a Macintosh interface in order to cut and paste anywhere on the screen (or in an on-screen notebook).

Third, the command interface is much more accessible than the traditional text adventure game. If one is unsure what to command the program to do, it is a simple matter to pull-down a window of possible verbs. When this is done, only the active (or possible) verbs are in bold print and inactive verbs are in a faint gray. One selects the verb and moves over and a sub-window appears with all the possible objects within the scene or in one's inventory which can be acted upon. If the desired verb isn't present on the menu, there is even a capability for the players to select and save the verbs that they choose to use.

The latter feature solves part of the problem with the "reverse parser" that the program is essentially using. In a reverse parser, the player is given all the possible command verbs and objects necessary to solve a puzzle. Since the solution is, then, visible on the screen, it is merely a matter of trial and error to discern the solution. Even though *Wonderland* uses what is basically a "reverse parser", this user-

Continued on page 26

Game Technology

Continued from page 24

definable capability enables the designers to make 90% of the puzzle solutions readily available (without having to type commands) but leaves 10% as a major challenge for the player in which the solution must be typed in by the player.

If one tires of using verb commands to explore a given area of the game, one can simply call up a compass window. When this is done, a compass appears with bold arrows demonstrating every possible direction the player can go and faint gray arrows indicating the limitations for player movement.

Another way of directing the action involves using a "point and click" method with the graphics. All active objects (i.e. those which can be manipulated) have accessible icons. These icons can, in turn, be dragged between the graphics of the locations and the player's inventory. This can be very important since the puzzles are basically object-oriented rather than people-oriented.

Fourth, the auto-mapping is extremely impressive in that one can, not only, examine the icon-based tree structure that represents the various locations in the game, but clicking on a location allows the player to call up any graphic already encountered in the course of a game. So, if a friend comes over and wants to see the Mad Hatter's tea party, one simply clicks on the right icon and calls up the animation. It is also a "layered" map in that the tree structure reflects the physical levels in the game environment (i.e. the underground's tree is separate from the surface, etc.).

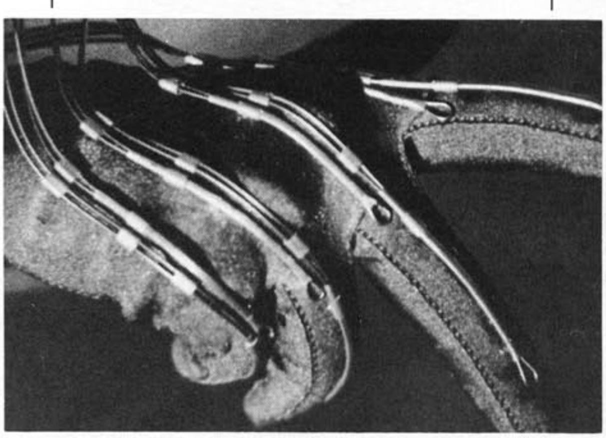
The windowing system used to revitalize the "text adventure" genre is programmed on a VAX development system. Hence, the system is machine independent, making conversions easier for this game than most. In addition, Sinclair hints that the windowing system is useful for more than "text adventures" and suggests that we watch for other types of products from **Magnetic Scrolls** using the system. Meanwhile, the company is firmly committed to the future of text games, underscored by the fact that they have invested so much in *Wonderland*, a game four times longer than *The Pawn*.

As Sinclair says, "Text adventures didn't die. They just became boring." She hopes that the new windowing technology will breathe new life into a genre she loves.



Virtual Reality (Far Future)

Those who are long-term science fiction readers may remember Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt", a short-story in which the children's playroom could be modified into any environment they wanted. Those who cannot remember that far back should be able to relate to the "holodeck" in *StarTrek: The Next Generation*. These are fictional settings where computers allegedly changed the perspective of the viewer/player to the point where they became submerged into an artificial reality which seemed real.



This is already happening, in a limited way, at the high tech research laboratories at the University of North Carolina, VPL Research, Inc. in Redwood City, Autodesk, Inc. and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Participants can walk through three-dimensional representations of buildings which do not yet exist (testing the ergonomics and traffic flow); manipulate a three-dimensional model (based on an actual medical scan) of a damaged or malfunctioning organ prior to operating on it; investigate sub-atomic particles from the inside out; walk through geological strata; and assemble and disassemble expensive engines, parts, and technological products without risking valuable equipment and resources. Eventually, students will be able to virtually "become" a Tyrannosaurus Rex and experience the earth from the perspective of a massive dinosaur.

How does "virtual reality" work? The participant wears a pair of goggles which are, in turn, connected to a pair of **Silicon Graphics** *IRIS*™ computers. A **Polhemus** *3Space Isotrak* system rests atop the headpiece and tracks the direction the participant turns his or her head (with the head's position on an X, Y and Z axis and the orientation as Yaw, Pitch and Roll). In this way, the computers paint stereo images that emulate exactly what one would see if they were moving their head in the environment being simulated. On some systems like NASA's, this is merely a wire-frame simulation (at present), but at VPL, one sees a multi-colored environment of fully contoured surfaces.

Of course, seeing is not necessarily believing. One needs a way to interact with the simulated environment, a way to "touch" what isn't there, but seems to be there. One approach, developed by Richard J. Feldmann of the National Institutes of Health, is a joystring. A "T" bar is suspended between nine taut wires (three at each end of the "T") which are, in turn, connected to shaft encoders and servomotors. By moving the "T", the differential tensions on the nine wires is altered and movement plus force can be measured. Using this approach, one can use the joystring as a remote manipulator device in order to react with the simulated objects of virtual reality or actually control robotic mechanisms at a distance.

The most common interface with regard to "touch" is the dataglove. Datagloves are sophisticated versions (and ancestors) of their mass market cousins (The *Power Glove* for **Nintendo**). Of course, the $8,800 price tag for a top-of-the-line dataglove is considerably out of the price range of the average consumer. Datagloves depend on fiber-optic cables which act as sensors to detect the

Continued on page 78



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Over There

Lost In Space or Vietnam: The Latest Games From Europe

by Paul Rigby



Epic



Lost Patrol

The designers at **Digital Image Design** are a promising lot. Their first product, *F29 Retaliator* is a ground breaking program which pushes polygons around the screen faster than any other flight simulation on the market today. Digital Image Design's background is enveloped within *Falcon* and *Flight of the Intruder*. It comes as a surprise, therefore, that their second product takes to the far reaches of space with a game, initially known as *Goldrunner 3D*, but more likely to appear as *Epic*. An apt title for a game which takes the mission-based flight simulation and weaves a space opera of galactic proportions around it.

Cue storyline: Your people live in a quiet corner of the Galaxy. A peaceful race, everything looks rosy until a global evacuation is required to escape the potential disaster of the local sun going supernova. To find a new world to colonize, however, means crossing an ancient neutral zone. The neighboring Rexxons would surely look upon any infringement of the zone as an act of war. There is no other option, so the chase is on!

You control an Epic-class spacecraft which acts as escort to the rest of the fleet. Central to the fleet is the gigantic Redstorm mothership, which houses your craft and provides strike capability of its own. Missions include hitting the Rexxon HQ on the planet's surface, disrupting radar installations, weaving your way through a complex minefield, defending the fleet supply ships from Rexxon attack and sabotaging a mining complex. Much of the technology that was used to produce *F29 Retaliator* has been used to produce *Epic*.

Available about now on the Amiga and ST, **Epic** (distributed via Ocean) uses fast, detailed solid 3-D graphics and atmospheric music courtesy of Holst's *The Planets*. All sound effects are digitized, with 64 colors present on the Amiga and 32 on the ST.

CCS, known for wargames such as *Annals of Rome*, is about to release *Frontline*. To be available on the PC, Amiga and ST, *Frontline* includes four battle scenarios in addition to two training scenarios. From 1944, Cassino depicts the New Zealand forces trying to crack the Gustav Line; Guadalcanal (1942) replays the Japanese attempt to dislodge the US Marines in the Battle of Bloody Ridge; Stalingrad (1943) depicts the last stand of the XI Corps; and the glider-borne assault on D-Day completes the package. The game is hex-based with very presentable graphics and an icon control system.

Looking very much like a **Cinemaware** production, **Ocean**'s *Lost Patrol* takes you back to Vietnam in 1966. You play Sergeant Weaver who must lead the remainder of his platoon back to safety after being hit by the Vietnamese. There are just six survivors, with two days food rations, who must trek the 58 miles back to camp. With ammo as precious as gold dust, you will have to enter villages to receive information on enemy troop movements. That is, if the villages themselves are not the enemy's! Other factors such as food rationing will have to be considered. Consume too much food and you'll run out before you reach safety. Consume too little and your men will be too weak to defend themselves if they are attacked.

In the traditions of the **Cinemaware**-esque genre, the strategy is mixed with arcade sequences. You'll have to crawl across minefields, take out machine gun nests, hold fist fights with VC scouts and, finally, take out snipers. However, even with these arcade sequences, the crux of *Lost Patrol* is still strategy. Available now on Amiga, with other conversion likely to follow, *Lost Patrol* retails at £24.99.

Using an enhanced version of their in-house system "Freescape", **Incentive** have announced the release of *Castle Master*. Freescape is a system which uses solid 3-D graphics, already seen in games such as *Driller*, *Eclipse* and *Dark Side*. The latter games have all been designed as thinking adventures with logical problems using object manipulation and various logic puzzles (the difference being that you actually move amongst the 3-D world, rather than conjuring up a picture via a text description or from a 2-D graphic). *Castle Master* is set in 16th Century England in which the player has to rescue a princess (or prince, depending on your persuasion) from one of four castle towers. This is not as easy as you might think, with each tower being made up of several rooms and floors. Never mind the evil spirits which haunt the place. Actually, as a subquest, you must flush out these monsters to make the area habitable again (who ya gonna' call?). *Castle Master* could be available as you read this on the Amiga, ST and PC for £4.99.

Right, another month ends and I'm off for my cocoa. Then again, I wonder if Scorpia's Tavern has closed yet? Hmm. Just in time for a quick tankard of Fred's best brew. See you next month!

NOTE: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in the past issues, can be obtained from:

Computer Adventure World
318 Kensington
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Tel: 01144-51-263-6306

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CGW

Circle Reader Service #34

THE BROWN WATER WAR

Accolade's "Gunboat: River Combat Simulator"

By Brad Bombardiere

I keep telling myself that it's just another night on this dirty river, but this time it's different. We're going deeper into the Delta than we've ever gone before. Past My-Thoa to a point where the brass thinks the NVA is using sampans to resupply their troops.

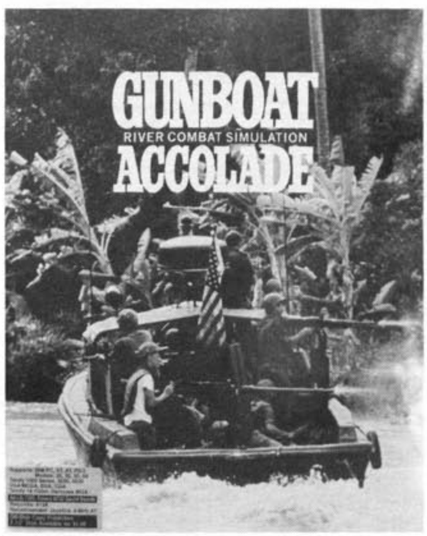
We've named our PBR (Patrol Boat, River) the "Sitting Duck", because that's how we feel out there. The enemy could be around any tree or bend in the river, beading down on us with a loaded RPG containing a round with our name on it.

The skipper keeps telling us, "Control the Delta and you control the war." Funny, when the tracers light past your ears, you just don't hear the skipper anymore. . .

This could as easily be a scene from *Apocalypse Now* as from **Accolade**'s *Gunboat: River Combat Simulator*. Both the film and the simulation effectively capture some of the frustration experienced by the veterans of guerrilla actions. *Gunboat* is a refreshing addition to the world of combat simulations that offers an "up close and personal" view of river patrol boat combat actions. In Gunboat, one sees the enemy in a *very* real way. Cut one down with machine gun fire, and they bend over and drop like real people. In fact, mortar rounds actually blow up everything from trees to buildings to water buffalo. The game play itself is more intense than many simulations because the player has no laser guided missiles or radar homing lock-ons. It's simply the good guys versus the bad guys bullet-to-bullet and shell-to-shell.

The game is built around piloting and using the weapons of a PBR. The boat itself was designed for speed and agility in the narrow waterways of Vietnam and does not use propellers, instead maneuvering through the use of water jets (it can, therefore, operate in water as shallow as four feet deep). It is lightly armored with an aluminum hull and is usually armed with twin .50 caliber guns, plus the grenade launcher (which terrorized the NVA). In fact, the designer of the game, Tom Loughry, explains that the water skiing scene in *Apocalypse Now* was true to life. It was not impossible for a PBR crew to throw out the ropes and ski behind this light and powerful boat.

Gunboat starts out with some stunning scenes in VGA graphics, with real shots of PBRs operating in VietNam and Wagner's "Die Valkyrie" playing in the background. There are three locations to operate in; Vietnam, Colombia and Panama (the canal zone). Like its predecessor, *Steel Thunder* (also designed by Loughry), the scenarios are completed in a linear fashion with increasing difficulty factors and the player may only proceed to the next area after fulfill-



TITLE:	Gunboat: River Combat Simulator
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Tom Loughry
PUBLISHER:	Accolade, Inc.

ing certain objectives in the present one. Since players have the option of choosing between active duty or practice missions (where the key strokes can be learned), those who are of the "read the documentation on a 'need to know basis' only" school should try the practice scenarios to get accustomed to the game before reporting for combat duty.

Once the player reports for combat duty, the role-playing shell for the game is handled almost exactly like *Steel Thunder*'s. At this point, the player's service record is displayed, recorded and kept. Then, the commanding officer offers a briefing on the situation and the player receives his orders and proceeds to outfit the PBR with specific types of engines and weaponry. Each offers advantages and disadvantages, so the player must chose carefully.

The bow gunner can choose between dual .50 caliber machine guns (slower rate of fire, but with armor-piercing rounds) or the .30 caliber Mini-gun (extremely high rate of fire, but ineffective against armored targets). The mid-ship area is the only place where one's devastating M129 grenade launcher can be located. The stern offers a difficult choice between a single .50 caliber machine gun (which the computer will man when you are not present at that station) or the potent 60mm mortar (which must always be fired by the player, personally).

The first thing one must do is to activate all of the various ship's stations. Searchlights are optional on night missions. The computer gunners will not actually open fire until they see the enemy. If one should happen to hit a "friendly", pack it in. . . Instant demotion, loss of medals, the disgrace brought upon the family name, etc. all await the over-zealous PBR commander.

One thing which amazed this reviewer was the graphic look of the spotlights dancing on the horizon as my crew searched out enemy targets. The use of 3-D graphics are excellent, with the look giving one an almost gut wrenching feel of what patrols might have been like. Additionally, the chase boat view gives you a perspective from behind the PBR, complete with full boat wake (as one steers the boat around, the wake following it is quite noticeable).

Gunboat also impressed this reviewer with its random pitching and natural movement, giving the player a true feeling of being in a small power boat on flowing water. One quickly learns that a high speed encounter with the rocks in the river will sink your PBR faster than a whole battalion of NVA's armed with rocket propelled grenades.

By the way, going to the gunner's station while the boat is traveling at high speed may prove to be fatal. The computer pilot should probably have his license revoked. Unfortunately, however, there are times when the pilot must be relied upon. In those cases, it is probably best to throttle down to half speed and stay on a steady course for over a minute before relinquishing the wheel. With this

Continued on page 32

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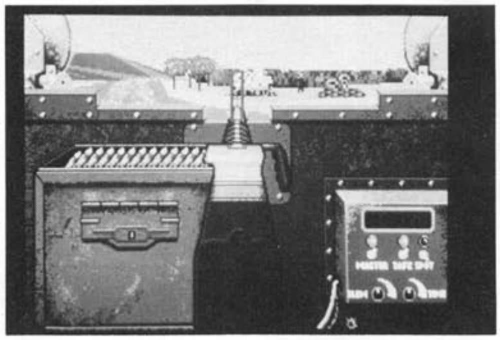
GUNBOAT

Continued from page 30

accomplished, the computer pilot *might* be able to take it from there.

This is not an exaggeration. Once, after maneuvering a PBR past an enemy armored column and on toward safety, the reviewer left the wheel to man a gun and return fire. In a matter of moments, the computer pilot had turned us around and parked the boat right next to the AFVs. The mission did not reach a successful conclusion, to say the least.

The long, tedious patrols, as one winds around the narrow waterways in the direction of the objectives, are broken up by fits of incredibly intense combat (By the way, "tourists" will be glad to know that along the way there is plenty of local color; flora, fauna, monuments, etc.). Using radar helps player's "see around corners". Then, once the enemy is spotted and the PBR starts to pour fire at them, trees and buildings near them catch fire, adding an ominous glow to the game.



It must be understood that hitting the enemy, as the PBR rocks in the waves, is somewhat more difficult than it will initially seem. Aiming the mortar is especially agonizing. At least, one is able to "walk" the shots in when using the machine guns or grenade launcher, but not with the mortar. Of course, one must also learn when discretion is the better part of valor and run at full speed, putting distance between the player's PBR and the enemy.

This reviewer has experimented with *Gunboat* on various IBM compatibles. The XT's are a little slow, but by dialing out some of the detail and using the time compression feature, the game is functional. *Gunboat* is at its best, however, on an 8-12Mhz AT machine or a 386 processor. Also, while **Accolade** recommends using a joystick, this reviewer does *not*. The fine adjustments to be made in steering and aiming the mortar are not conducive to a joystick. The keyboard is much more accurate.

Gunboat is a simulation unlike any other experienced by this reviewer. It offers a blood and guts perspective of the war hitherto neglected in military simulations. Since PBRs operated primarily on solo missions, which is why this situation converts so nicely to the computer gaming environment. The simulation aspects are not overly technical, but the combat is very intense. One complaint is that the enemy emplacements never change (by mapping their locations, you will find them there every time). Also, it might be nice to select one's own crew (like in *Steel Thunder*). Yet, these are but quibbles. For those who have tired of their flight or tank simulators, make a splash with *Gunboat*, a high speed combat "rollercoaster" ride offering both authenticity and good old shoot-'em- up fun.

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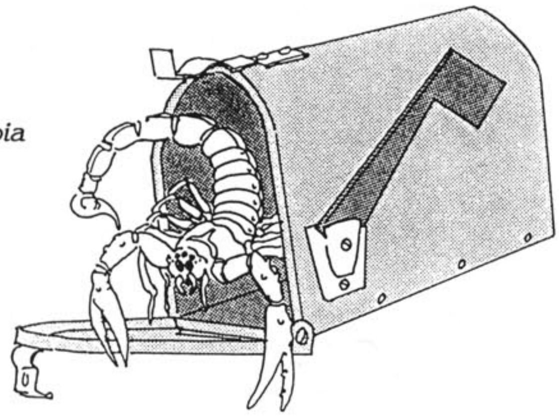


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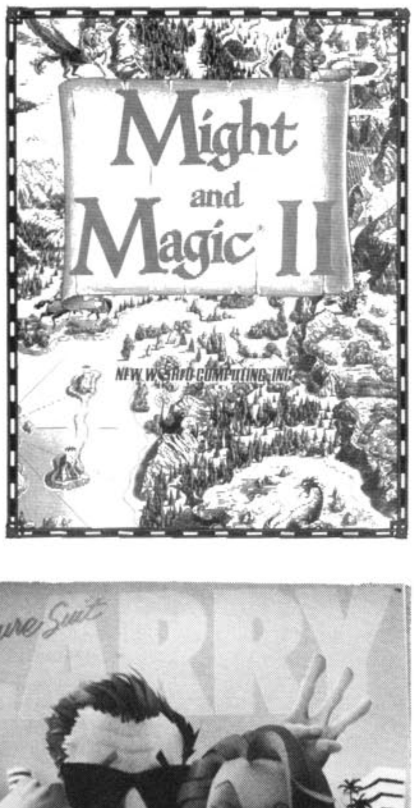
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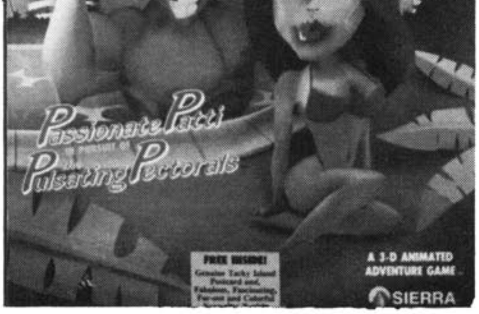
Scorpion's Mail

by Scorpia









It's time again to rummage amongst the mail sacks (No not those in the corner! Fred is snoozing behind them and he gets very peeved when disturbed!) and see what the US Postal Service has managed to deliver (They're getting a little better these days).

For those who have been wondering, I generally base the hints in this column on questions I receive from readers. Aside from answering them individually by mail, I choose the most-often asked questions for inclusion here. That's because if five people write to me about the same problem in the same game, it's likely there are others out there in the same difficulty.

By the way, after my remarks in the last mail column, I have noted a definite improvement in letters accompanied by SASE's. For the first time in a long time, no letter arrived without that needed item. I hope this trend continues, because I really don't enjoy ignoring people's requests. And now, on to the mail!

Wasteland: In the December '89 Mail, I mentioned that Faran Brygo becomes a bit reclusive after you visit him. Some people unfortunately thought this meant there might be a way to see him again. That is *not* the case. What I was saying (or trying to) is that there is *no* way to get to him after that first visit where you learn about Max. My apologies to anyone who went off on a wild goose chase in this matter.

Dragon Wars: Dwarves! You have to help out those poor Dwarves. Of course, you need to *find* them first. Wander around the vicinity of Byzanople and you might find something of interest. Until you've done that, Roba's skull won't be of much use to you (and if you don't have the skull yet, you should still visit the Dwarves and fix 'em up for later . . . and remember, stealing isn't nice). Finally, for those in need of transportation, there is no way around it, you have to take on the pirates (good luck!).

Might & Magic II: Winning the Triple crown has caused some folks a lot of problems. That's because the way to do it is not obvious in the least. Try fighting in all three arenas on the black ticket (Naturally, you have to fight *and* win!). Then, go see the Queen. She might like you more now.

Leisure Suit Larry 3: Seems like Patti is having a hard time getting across the chasm. This is not as difficult as it looks. The means of making it over are right there. You just need to do something with them first . . . . Think basket. Larry has troubles of his own, too. Apparently he has a knife that wouldn't cut soft

butter and wonders where he can get it sharpened. Well, maybe if he steps in the right direction, he'll find what he needs.

Battletech: It appears there is a slight difference between the IBM and C64 versions of this game in regard to the cache. From letters I've received, the cache is not quite in the same place in both versions. In the IBM version, it's on an island, while in the C64, it's on land. My thanks to the readers who pointed this out to me and apologies (again) to anyone I sent off to the wrong place.

Neuromancer: You can improve your skills the easy way by visiting the Turing Registry in Zone 3. It certainly beats doing it the hard way (grin). For those who may be having a hard time visiting the Panther Moderns, a little hacking into the police files will be of great help.

Magic Candle: Some folks are having difficulty acquiring dream dust. That's because only one person has it and she's not around (bet you noticed that, eh?). Take a trek through Bedandigar and see what you can turn up.

Bard's Tale I: Yep, this oldie is still around and still giving a few people fits. In particular, that nasty "lost stairs" puzzle. Life would be easier if it showed up right there after you answer the riddle, but life ain't always easy (especially not in this game). You'll have to go looking for the stairs; fortunately, they're not too far away. Sorcerer Sight is helpful in determining the location. Try moving to the northwest of the room with the magic mouth.

Wizardry V: If you're looking for the Ice Ferry on level 6, you may already have seen it. It just doesn't happen to look like any Ferry you've ever seen before, that's all. Magic stuff is strange that way, sometimes. Also, if you're wondering where Evil Eyes may be hanging out, you might try going into the room on 6 that negates magic. He usually shows up soon after.

That's it for this look into the bag. Remember if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways: On Delphi, stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie, visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to visit the Games RT). By US Mail (remember that SASE if you live in the US!): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

 CGW



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The CGW Test Lab Meets The Tandy 1000 TL/2

When *CGW* started getting nasty notes on R.I.D. cards and anonymous phone calls indicating that gamers were having compatibility problems with the TL/2 (with Tandy VGA cards), we had trouble believing it. After all, **Tandy** is a major market for IBM compatibles and most entertainment software publishers go out of their way to make sure Tandy machines are properly supported. So, we set up a Tandy 1000 TL/2 with a VGA card and one (count 'em) 3.5" floppy disk drive. We wanted to see what our readers were talking about.

We asked for 3.5" formats of all the IBM products covered in the last six months of "Taking A Peek" and tried to boot them all. We are happy to say that most of the games out there work quite efficiently, even with this configuration. Even some of the games that our readers said they had experienced difficulty with functioned on this machine.

However, there are some special cases and it is the intent of this article to alert our readers to these potential problems. Out of the mass of games which we tested, there were only two games which would not boot on the machine as configured and four that required special treatment.

Activision's *Tongue of the Fatman*, for example, does not state that one needs a hard disk or two floppy drives in order to "unzip" the files from the production disks. The game works fine on one drive, once the files are unzipped, and it looks terrific, but one must borrow another computer to "unzip" the files. Even those who have one 3.5" and one 5.25" drive won't have any trouble with the "unzipping" process. They can put the 5.25" floppies in that drive and use the "Install" routine to copy the appropriate files to two different 3.5" floppies. It's a long process, but it works.

Electronic Arts' *F-16 Combat Pilot* offers a similar obstacle. The packaging for this game does not indicate that one needs either a hard disk or two floppy disk drives to "install" the program. In this case, the 3.5" version of the game comes packaged separately from the 5.25" version. Also, the "Install" program doesn't always recognize that a machine only has one drive. Therefore, those who have only one floppy may need to borrow a machine with two drives and use the "Install" program to load the program onto either another 3.5" disk (if the machine has two 3.5" drives) or two 5.25" disks (if the machine has one 3.5" and one 5.25" disks). Then, using the simple DOS command ("copy a:*.* b:") allows one to copy the files on both 5.25" diskettes onto a 720K (3.5") diskette. The game runs fine with one drive after this has been accomplished.

The other major problem in using the Tandy 1000 TL/2 in this configuration is that some games simply do not recognize the Tandy VGA card. This is a temporary problem, but it is real nonetheless. For example, **Data East**'s *Robocop* and *Super Hang-On* search for the Tandy graphics mode, which is not available in this configuration. Therefore, one must remove the VGA card to boot these games. According to Denny Thorley, future products from **Data East** will recognize this graphics mode.

Interplay had the same problem with the initial versions of *BattleChess* on the IBM. They have fixed the problem, though, so anyone with this problem can contact their customer service department for a new diskette.

Kyodai's *Psychic War* will not boot in this configuration if one types "PW T" to start the game or a simple "PW" (as though one had a hard drive). Of course, there is a quick fix here. Since the problem is that the program is looking for the Tandy 16 color mode and the machine has a VGA card, one must only type "PW E" and the program will load normally.

The CGW Test Lab Meets RollerMouse

We have found that many gamers prefer a mouse-driven interface, but do not have the room to spare in order to move that mouse around on their desks. Of course, it is possible to "make do" and place an oversize book and mouse pad on their laps in order to play their favorite games using the mouse interface, but it isn't very efficient (especially when one has to reach up and access the keyboard, it is easy to dump book, mouse and mouse pad on the floor).

Now, **CH Products** has taken an old idea, the trackball, and updated it to provide a solution for those of us who have a space problem but prefer the mouse interface. A trackball, for those who have not previously used them, is similar to an upside-down mouse. So, instead of moving the mouse around on a flat surface in order to move the ball underneath and hence, input the X and Y coordinates, one moves the ball directly in order to input the X and Y coordinates. This provides a smaller footprint in order to operate it and makes for more efficient use.

Called the *RollerMouse*, this trackball is fully compatible with any program which uses the **Microsoft Mouse** driver. It is available in both a serial and bus version for the IBM ($129.95) and is also available for the Macintosh and Apple II series computers ($119.95).

CGW's "test lab" recently tested a *RollerMouse* serial version and found it to be as advertised. We had no problem booting games which support the mouse interface and found that the four buttons and ergonomically-designed lightweight unit housing made it very easy to use. We found it to be ideal for games like *Revolution '76* which use a windows-style interface and have the player selecting icons and menu-items. It was both fast and precise for this style game. It was also quite easy-to-use in terms of point-and-click movement, as in *SimCity*.

The only area where we felt the *RollerMouse* to be a less efficient interface than a pure mouse was in action games like *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* and *Shufflepuck Cafe* where one needs to use quick and precise movement. With the traditional mouse, one intuitively adjusts distances on the screen in a one-to-one correspondence with how far the mouse is moved across the table. With the trackball, one does not have a physical distance to measure movement against. To be sure, the longer players use the trackball, the closer they can come to judging distances, but it is not as clear-cut or intuitive as with the traditional mouse. Our technicians found that experience compensates for intuitive movement, but is not quite equivalent.

Strategy and adventure gamers who like the mouse interface, but find their desk is often too cluttered, will definitely want to consider the *RollerMouse* as a practical alternative to the traditional mouse (or cleaning one's desk). Action gamers will want to try one out before moving to this option.



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System requirements: IBM PC, XT, AT, or compatible with 256K RAM, DOS 2.0 or higher, CGA, EGA, or monochrome graphics adaptor, and headset or external speaker.

See Reader Input Device on page 64

The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first person perspectives of real world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take your alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

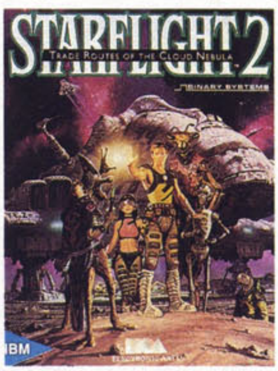
Role-Playing Adventures (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

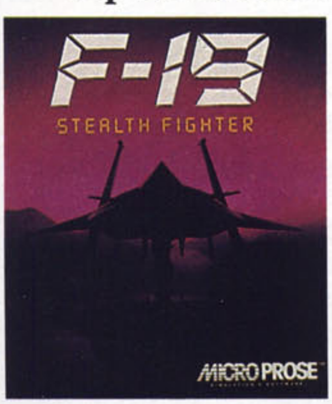
Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of this specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machine	Cat.	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	Their Finest Hour	LucasFilm	I	AC,SI	76	10.53
2.	F-19 Stealth Fighter	MicProse	I	SI	88	9.81
3.	SimCity	Maxis	Many	ST,SI	109	9.74
4.	M-1 Tank Platoon	MicProse	I	SI,WG	68	9.71
5.	Harpoon	Three-Sixty	I	WG	63	9.45
6.	Populous	EA	Am,I,ST	ST	102	9.39
7.	Starflight 2	EA	I	RP	51	9.22
8.	Lords of Rising Sun	Cnmwre	Am	AC,ST	54	9.19
	Red Storm Rising	MicProse	C,I,ST	SI	71	9.19
	TV Sports Basketball	Cnmwre	Am,I,ST	ST	27	9.19

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machines	Cat.	Avg # Resp.	Rating
11.	Battlehawks 1942	LucasFilm	Am,I,ST	AC,SI	86	9.17
12.	Sword of Aragon	SSI	I	ST,WG	33	9.15
13.	MechWarrior	Activision	I	SI,RP	48	9.13
14.	Nuclear War	New World	Am	ST	27	9.07
15.	Wasteland	EA	Ap,C,I	RP	120	9.04
16.	Bard's Tale III	EA	Ap,C	RP	74	9.03
	Ultima V	Origin	Ap,I	RP	102	9.03
18.	Loom	LucasFilm	I	AD	20	9.00
19.	Hero's Quest	Sierra	I	AD	47	8.98
20.	Space Quest III	Sierra	Am,I,ST	AD	34	8.97
21.	Romance/3Kngdms	Koei	Am,I	ST,RP	31	8.96
22.	Action Stations	CnflctAnlytic	I	WG	22	8.95
23.	Indy: Adventure	LucasFilm	AD	Am,I	23	8.93
	Overrun	SSI	Ap,C	WG	24	8.93
25.	Sword of Samurai	MicProse	I	ST,RP	44	8.92
26.	Falcon	SpcHolo	Many	SI	62	8.90
27.	NFL Challenge	XOR	I,M	ST	86	8.87
28.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	Ap,C	RP	29	8.84
29.	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	Ap,C,I	RP	54	8.81
30.	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	Ap,C,I	RP	43	8.80
31.	Genghis Khan	Koei	I	ST,RP	32	8.79
	Project Stealth Ftr	MicPr	C	SI	29	8.79
33.	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	30	8.77
	Battletech	Infocom	Am,I,ST	RP	48	8.77
	Fire Brigade	Panther	Am,I,M	WG	22	8.77
	Leisure Suit III	Sierra	Am,I	AD	47	8.77
37.	Airborne Ranger	MicProse	C,I,ST	AC	74	8.76
	F-15 Strk Eagle 2	Micprose	I	SI	57	8.76
39.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	Many	AD	58	8.75
40.	Breach 2	Omnitrend	Am,I,ST	ST,RP	29	8.71
41.	Neuromancer	Interplay	Ap,C,I	AD	33	8.70
42.	Battlechess	Interplay	Am,I,ST	ST	58	8.68
	Indianapolis 500	EA	I	SI	24	8.68
44.	Curse of Azure Bonds	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	70	8.67
	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	Ap,C	WG	43	8.67
46.	Ballistyx	Psygns	Am,ST,I	AC	20	8.65
	Chessmaster 2100	Toolworks	Many	ST	44	8.65
	Police Quest II	Sierra	I,GS,ST	AD	43	8.65
	Zany Golf	EA	Am,I,ST	AC	31	8.65
50.	Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	Am,I	AC,ST	38	8.64
51.	Sword of Sodan	Discovery	Am,GS	AC	27	8.63
52.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	116	8.61
53.	Champs of Krynn	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	56	8.55
54.	It Came From Desert	Cnmware	Am,ST	AD	36	8.54
55.	A-10 Tank Killer	Dynamix	I	SI	40	8.53

THE HALL OF FAME

The Games In CGW's Hall Of Fame Have Been Highly Rated By Our Readers Over Time. They Are Worthy Of Play By All.

Bard's Tale I
Chessmaster
Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
Gettysburg
Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Starflight
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machines	Cat.	Avg # Resp.	Rating
	Nobunaga's Ambition	Koei	I	ST,RP	51	8.53
57.	Carrier Command	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC,WG	49	8.51
	DeathTrack	Activision	I	AC	29	8.51
	Knights of Legend	Origin	Ap,C,I	RP	23	8.51
	Panzer Strike	SSI	Ap,C	WG	68	8.51
61.	Silent Service	MicProse	Many	SI	257	8.50
62.	Hostage	Mindscape	Am,I,ST	AC	28	8.47
63.	Gold of America	SSG	Am,I	ST	28	8.46
64.	688 Attack Sub	EA	Am,I	SI,ST	48	8.42
	Manhunter 2	Sierra	I,M,ST	AD	31	8.42
66.	TV Sports Football	Cnmwre	Am,I,ST	AC,ST	50	8.39
67.	Arkanoid	Dsc/Taito	Many	AC	69	8.38
	Wings of Fury	Brodbnd	Ap	AC	52	8.38
69.	Strike Fleet	EA	Ap,C,I	WG	79	8.37
70.	Rocket Ranger	Cnmwre	Am,ST	AC,AD	75	8.32
71.	Modem Wars	EA	C,I	ST	24	8.29
72.	Manhunter	Sierra	Many	AD	72	8.25
73.	Police Quest	Sierra	Many	AD	98	8.23
74.	Starglider II	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC	65	8.22
75.	Jack Nicklaus' Golf	Accolade	Am,C,I	AC,ST	28	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cnmwre	Am,C,GS	AC	68	8.21
77.	Leisure Suit Lry II	Sierra	Many	AD	52	8.20
78.	Battlegroup	SSI	Ap,C	WG	36	8.19
79.	Colonel's Bequest	Sierra	I	AD	30	8.17
80.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	I	AC,SI	31	8.16
81.	Tetris	SpcHolo	Many	AC,ST	46	8.13
82.	Vette!	SpcHolo	I	AC	26	8.12
83.	Stealth Mission	Sublogic	C	SI	36	8.11
84.	Shiloh	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	54	8.09
	Zork Series	Infocom	Many	AD	218	8.09
86.	Faery Tale Adventure	Micllsn	Many	RP	59	8.07
87.	Speedball	Cnmware	Many	AC	35	8.06
88.	Russia	SSG	Ap,C	WG	61	8.05
89.	Sentinel Worlds	EA	I,C	RP	71	8.04
	Techno-Cop	Epyx	C,ST	AC	23	8.04
91.	Test Drive II	Accolade	Am,C,I	AC	42	8.02
92.	WC Leader Board	Access	Many	AC,ST	97	8.00
93.	Leather Goddesses	Infocom	Many	AD	136	7.99
94.	Breach	Omnitrnd	Many	ST,RP	114	7.98
95.	Enchanter	Infocom	Many	AD	115	7.97
96.	Jordan vs Bird	EA	C,I	AC	47	7.96
97.	Omega	Origin	Many	ST	49	7.92
	Prophecy	Activision	Am,I	AD	32	7.92
99.	Ghostbusters II	Activision	I	AC	29	7.91
100.	Wizardry V	Sir-Tech	Ap,I	RP	43	7.88

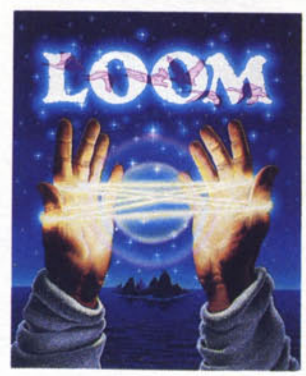
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Top Action/Arcade



Top Adventure



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THREE-SIXTY

Rings of Medusa

Serpentine Strategy in a Fantasy Setting

By Douglas Seacat

Revenge, conquest, treachery and the quest for economic might form the bulwark of this fantasy/strategy. In the game, Cirion (a young king recently deposed from this throne) seeks revenge on the demon queen Medusa, who has slain his friends and forced him into exile. Without any resources, loyal troops, or much money, Cirion must rebuild his kingdom to its former glory and destroy his enemy, Medusa. To accomplish this end, Cirion will have to find the Five Rings of Medusa which will grant him power and eventually summon the demon queen herself.



Rings of Medusa is primarily a strategy game with trading elements. Initially, the player must develop trade routes in order to increase his coffers, whereupon he can either buy troops to begin conquest or purchase scouts to find mines for more money. Since many cities are controlled by Medusa, it is important for the player to amass a large store of wealth in order to create a working plan of conquest, as armies can be expensive to equip, train, and maintain. At the same time, the player must be continuously searching for the Five Rings, whose coordinates can be found in various cities and ports.

Game Mechanics

Most of the time spent in the game is spent either on the strategic map, or the town menu. Upon the strategic map, the player can explore the many screens of the world of Medusa. As time quickly passes, the player can move from town to town, attack castles or towns, search for mines or treasure, or use ships to sail to ports or islands.

In town, the player can enter a variety of shops and other buildings. Markets allow the purchase of goods for trade, banks offer loans and interest rates, temples occasionally give clues, and so on. Of special importance within cities is the park area, which allows the recruitment of troops for upcoming conquest.

To win, the player will need to purchase a large and effective army. However, before that army can be purchased, money must be raised, (and quite a bit of money, at that). It is important that the player trade extensively *before* building an army since maintaining an effective army can quickly eat up all profit made through trading. Trading itself involves the purchase and selling of different goods from town to town, using either ships or wagons as transportation. Unfortunately, without protection, any trading mission can quickly turn to failure if the wagon train happens to be attacked by an enemy army (see Problems).

TITLE:	Rings of Medusa
SYSTEM:	Amiga, Atari ST and IBM
REVIEWED:	Amiga
PRICE:	$49.95
PUBLISHER:	Star Games 708 W. Buffalo Ave. Suite 200 Tampa, FL 33603

Another method of earning money involves the use of mines, which can be found by employing scouts. The number of scouts employed by the player determines how wide of a radius those scouts can search for mines, which can then be exploited by the player. Mines can be quite profitable once established, but require a large starting fund (since a mining machine must be purchased, and an additional 30000 gold is required to open the mine). For this reason, trading must be employed initially to earn the required revenue necessary to hire a good supply of scouts to find such mines.

Once the player manages to gather together a large enough horde of troops, he can actually try conquering towns and castles. Combat is very straight forward, with the player simply commanding certain troops to advance to battle at the right times and, possibly, withdrawing when too many casualties have been taken. The game includes a "negotiate" option which supposedly allows combat to be obviated through bribery or threats, but it is this reviewer's experience that such methods rarely work.

Good Points

One aspect of the game which I enjoyed was the variety of unit types and races in building an army. The different factors to consider gave a sense of depth to the process of recruitment which isn't often found in strategy games. This was heightened by the fact that different races came in varying abundance in the towns. For example, humans are very abundant, but not particularly specialized in anything. On the other hand, halflings, gnomes, and zwarks make good artillery and wizards, but are in scarce supply. Thus, it is necessary under certain circumstances to use an inferior, but more numerous, race for a particular unit type. The amount of thought that went into

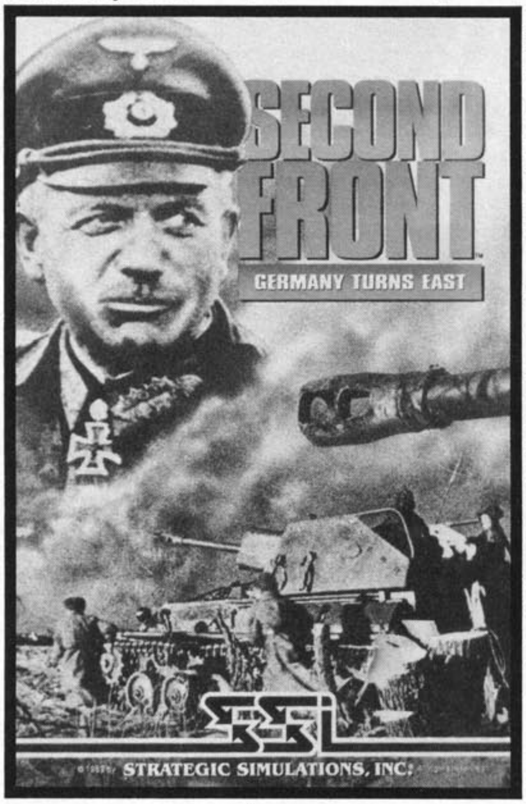
Continued on page 59

Hitler's "Second Front"

SSI's Strategic Eastern Front World War II Game

by M. Evan Brooks

Second Front, a detailed simulation of the German-Soviet Conflict of World War II, is prolific wargame designer Gary Grigsby's first entry to the 16-bit world of MS-DOS. An obvious descendant of his *War in Russia* (designed for the 8-bit computers of the mid-1980s), *Second Front* is an amazing product.



The Enigma Book (Documentation)

The documentation may be summed up as abysmal. In addition to misspellings, some incorrect formulas, omitted help keys and an extensive (and not entirely correct) READ.ME file, the manual is composed in computerese, not English; obviously, no one heeded Xerxes' maxim that "exact thinking and exact language go hand in hand".

For instance, a simulation of the Eastern Front on this scale should emphasize logistics (or the lack thereof). The bonus/penalties for troop's supply states are unclear and would benefit from specific examples. The explanation of rail building is convoluted and states that rails convert to friendly control when the SL (Supply Level) is four or higher, except during the Blitzkrieg (the first ten turns), when Axis SL must be eight or higher. Since the German forces are at their logistic peak at the inception of "Barbarossa", why do they need a higher SL? Careful analysis of the rules shows that captured rails convert to friendly control when 1-2 hexes from an operational railhead. Since the Germans begin with an SL of 10 (which later drops to 6, illustrating the consumption of pre-stocked supplies), the rule does, in effect, say this. However, this reviewer feels that it should have been stated in plain English.

Certain terms are undefined. The "Aircraft Chart" does not define LB (although the term "Level Bomber" is embedded in the main text). Similarly, a plane category, CAN ("Cannon"), is not defined at all. A careful perusal of the manual before printing would have rectified most of these errors.

Tables of cities (with production capabilities) and generals (with leadership ratings) are listed in no discernible order, hence are difficult to find.

Finally, the player "Tips and Hints" are too abbreviated. To offer the Axis the sole tip that he should smash Soviet airgroups with air missions gives new meaning to the term "de minimis". With all of the ramifications of a strategic/operational simulation covering multi-years of WWII with armies deployed in corps elements, player assistance should have been *much* more detailed. Instead, this is left to the player. [In order to assist the user, next month CGW Assistant Editor Alan Emrich will reveal some of the missing formulas and commands and offer some strategies and tactics in a detailed article].

NAME:	Second Front: Germany Turns East
SYSTEM:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	0-2
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Gary Grigsby
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Simulations, Inc.

Despite these shortcomings, *Second Front* is still very playable. The documentation should be carefully read, as only actual play can reveal the many subtle nuances that exist herein.

Color My Welt (Graphics)

Second Front's graphics are colorful and well-done. Although they are not of cinematic quality, they are more than sufficient for a strategic/operational wargame of the Eastern Front. [Note: the box label failed to mention that the CGA graphics are in monochrome]. The geography ranges from Finland (north) to Baku and the Italian boot (south), and from Cologne (west) to Kazan (east). Units (armor, infantry and headquarters) and terrain are easy to differentiate and, as the infamous Russian winter approaches, the EGA terrain changes as the rivers freeze and snow covers the ground. (Note that the weather effects the entirety of Russia in a single week, which is admittedly unrealistic; Chris Crawford's *Eastern Front* {1979} showed a similar weather change which was graduated from north to south over several weeks). In summary, the map is broad in scope and the graphics are more than adequate to play the simulation. An additional consideration is that units are deployed by headquarters and corps (composed of individually detailed divisions). If one wishes to resolve combat on a more tactical level, he may choose from up to three detail levels of combat reports (the most detailed reports yield actual division level, blow-by-blow engagements and casualty figures down to individual vehicles and squads). Of course, this slows the combat resolution substantially, yet it is still an attractive feature of *Second Front*.

> *Despite shortcomings, Second Front is very playable.*

Looking for Lebensraum (Game Play)

Second Front offers four scenarios: Campaign (1941), Campaign (1942), Moscow and Stalingrad. Most grognards will play the 1941 campaign as soon as they open the box (something about "real wargamers" always playing the longest campaign games they can find). This, however, is not recommended. The smaller scenarios are excellent learning tools and serve one well as he progresses on towards Barbarossa. The 1942 Campaign is particularly welcome, since most gamers will be able to determine their prognosis for which side will achieve overall victory by the end of 1941. Thus, games will rarely extend into the latter stages of the war. By utilizing the 1942

Campaign Scenario, one will be able to achieve a better conception of the later war years.

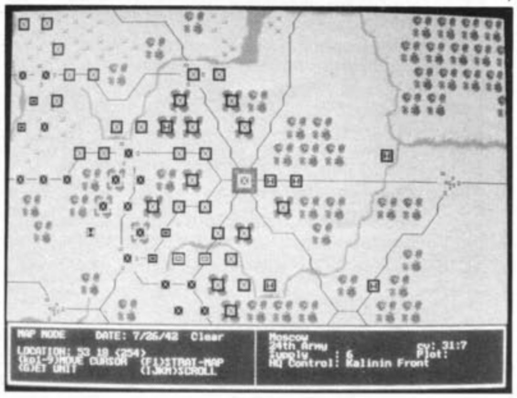
Since *Second Front* offers a computer vs. computer option, careful observation of such a game will reveal sound initial strategies and tactics.

As for play balance, note that "Even" balance should only be used in a computer vs. computer or human vs. human contest. With one player against the computer, options should be set to give some advantage to the computer player. These options maximize the "historicity" of the simulation (a rational computer AI is much harder to achieve when the computer has the burden of the offense). With 20-mile hexes and weekly turns, *Second Front* will not generally be played in one sitting (a player could easily spend an hour just studying his position and pondering his orders for a single turn). A 1941 campaign should take about 12-20 hours to reach a decision point. Again, examine the READ.ME file—one cannot save a game unless he creates a \SAVE subdirectory. Also, note that delay/report options are reset to zero upon reaccessing a saved file. Therefore, be sure to immediately hit the space bar at the first air combat result so the reports can be read and analyzed.

Turns follow a sequence of play, with the Axis player's turn first. The sequence is movement, production/event variables and combat. Since *Second Front* is played in discrete turns, a two player game could be played by each player transmitting his two saved files after his turn is completed.

Victory is achieved by occupation of a certain number of enemy cities. Initially, this reviewer was concerned over the victory conditions (e.g. is geography or destruction of enemy military forces the key to victory?). However, an examination of the "Victory Cities" reveals that their defense should involve the bulk of the enemy military capabilities. Note that Gorki is a victory city in the 1941 Campaign Scenario. If the Germans seize Leningrad and Moscow, this is normally the closest city for Strategic Victory. During winter turns, the Soviet forces do *not* garrison cities (other than Moscow), opting instead for a counter-offensive. This strategy can well lead to a German panzer corps sneaking into Gorki, completely out of supply, while a significant Russian force ignores it. This feature may be corrected in Version 1.1 by either adjusting the Artificial Intelligence or changing the victory city to Kazan. *Second Front* is relatively easy to learn to use. At the same time, it is difficult to learn to use *well*.

Mouse implementation is lacking. While such a deficiency is not as fatal as games where one must plot dozens of moves per unit each turn (here, the maximum any unit can move is five hexes), mouse interface would have made the game *much* smoother than the keyboard input. Also, production adjustments are cumbersome; one must first check the production of a particular item (e.g. Pz II, Armored Cars, etc.) in order to determine the particular cities and then, map scroll to the particular cities. A "window environment" or automatic "Flash To [City]" would have been appreciated.



Reich-Thinking (Notes on Logistics)

Proper use of supply is the key to victory. While Moghilev may be seized by the third week of the invasion by an armored spearhead, such a thrust often will place the armor out of supply, and an additional month may be required to extricate and replenish the isolated armor corps. A German capture of Moscow will devastate Soviet replacement capabilities, and shift the ratio of German to Russian losses from a 3-5:1 ratio to 10-20:1.

Production should be analyzed early. Obsolete armor and airplane factories should be quickly adjusted to produce war machinery more suited to the player's needs. Similarly, the German OKW (Oberkommando des Wehrmacht) has a large number of unassigned divisions; these reserves should be reassigned to new corps, and used for anti-Partisan missions or to assist in the main offensive. Finnish air assets should be transferred to Army Group North after the initial air attack, since the Finns are useless until such time as Leningrad falls. Interestingly enough, the Finnish air engenders great Soviet animosity, since a computer Soviet will attack it wherever it goes.

Most combat corps can do well with three divisions assigned. The remainder should be assigned to the front-line headquarters element, which will feed additional divisions in as needed. Thus, when one has time to rest a corps, a divisional transfer should be effected. Also, "a tank is a tank is a tank" because certain assets must be placed in the Western and Italian Fronts and the computer does not distinguish quality. Therefore, transfer obsolete units to the West and maintain the more modern units in the East. Also, increase the replacement value in the spearhead elements (note that this is done by accessing the Headquarters and pressing "+"; use the "+" on the numeric keypad or else the SHIFT-+ on the keyboard since the latter is actually an =). Note that the Order of Battle is well done, and it is fascinating to see Soviet units receive the coveted "Guards" title as they gain combat experience.

Uber Alles (Leadership and Doctrine)

Individual leaders are present for the headquarters elements, and should be carefully evaluated. A German player should immediately remove all commanders with a rating of less than "6" (on a 1-9 scale). Individual command ratings are generally accurate, although this reviewer has certain reservations (e.g. "Smiling Albert" Kesselring is rated as a 9; he did a superb job of defending the Italian Front, but how would he have done on the Russian steppes?). Hitler and Himmler are both rated at a 3. This reviewer thinks Hitler's "Stand Fast" order in 1941 may well have saved the German Army and hence, he should be rated higher than Himmler. Grigsby thinks Hitler was an overall disaster.

German Player Notes: Soviet partisan operations may appear threatening, but rarely cause real damage. In fact, recent historians have called the entire partisan effectiveness into question. Even when a unit is isolated and seemingly combat ineffective, its leader may still get a random chance at substantially increasing the combat effectiveness.

Soviet mechanized formations should be isolated and reduced at leisure rather than by mass frontal assaults in the early months. It is quite difficult to achieve the historical German phase line objectives in June through August 1941, and it is *very* rare to achieve a "Kiev-like pocket" in which 600,000 Soviet troops can be surrounded and destroyed. Instead, one achieves small (1-2 unit) pockets, which can then be forced to surrender. While the initial phase lines may be slower than historical, the German Army has a tendency to keep moving. Do NOT become discouraged by early delays and seemingly large losses (i.e. a ratio of less than 5:1). Repeated assaults will eventually lead to a Soviet crisis point on or about October 12, 1941 in which Leningrad, Moscow and Sevastopol should fall. With such losses, the Soviets cannot rebound.

As the German player, do **not** allow the panzers to get too far out of supply. A narrow front advance is not optimal, and one should access the F9 key often in order to determine the "area control". However, a Soviet counter-offensive in mid-1941 is seldom tragic for the Germans. In order for the Soviet computer

to achieve a multi-hex coordinated assault, the computer compares a random number (1-100), which must be less than the commander's rating. Since the best commander's rating is only a 9, it is obvious that Soviet assaults have little chance of success (the actual percentage may be about 2%).

The documentation notes that air elements can be used once per turn. This is true of bombing missions, but use of Alt-I (interdiction missions) can be repeated as often as one desires. These "fighter sweeps" are interesting, but their impact on the overall simulation is negligible.

Promotion List (Conclusions)

Obviously, *Second Front* is not the perfect wargame. However, even with the user interface, the confusing documentation and other anomalies, it is still recommended as a mandatory purchase by the grognard. Its multi-level of play, the "number crunching" wherein losses are taken down to squads and individual vehicles—all are magnets for the hard-core gamer. The casual gamer or one not really interested in the Russian Front may find this product somewhat tedious, but for boardgame players who began with *Stalingrad* and *Panzerblitz* and continued onwards, *Second Front* will prove a rewarding experience.

CGW

Recommended Reading

Sadly, *Second Front* lacks a bibliography. Discussions with Mr. Grigsby have yielded the following sources that he relied on:

Mitcham, Samuel W., *Hitler's Legions*, the standard English version of the German Order of Battle for the Second World War;
Poirier and Conner, *The Red Army Order of Battle*, a similar reference for the Soviets;
Ziemke, Earl F., *Moscow to Stalingrad and Stalingrad to Berlin*, a well-written narrative of the East Front.

In addition, this reviewer would recommend:

Erickson, John, *The Road to Stalingrad and The Road to Berlin*, perhaps the quintessential English reference;
Vincent Esposito,*The West Point Atlas of American Wars*, despite the title, it also covers the Russian Front in full and superb multi-colored maps;
Irving, David, *Hitler's War*, revisionist history at its best (worst?), in which a sympathetic portrait of Hitler emerges;
Keegan, John, *The Second World War*, which is more broad-based, but the author is always thought-provoking;
Sajer, Guy, *The Forgotten Soldier*, an autobiography of an individual Wehrmacht soldier's experiences;
Werth, Alexander, *Russia at War*, the best one-volume history of the Eastern Front;
Young, Peter, *Atlas of the Second World War*, a well-done war atlas available in paperback.

Also, the movie, *Cross of Iron* (with James Coburn) gives a perspective of what the Russian front must have been like.



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VGA	YES	NO
Menu Driven	YES	NO
Real time play	YES	NO
Campaign area > 147 miles	YES	NO
Use all available men	YES	NO
Send out patrols	YES	NO
Stage the battle at a different location vs. historical	YES	NO
Improved graphics	YES	NO
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Sierra's "Code-Name: Iceman"

by Michael Chaut

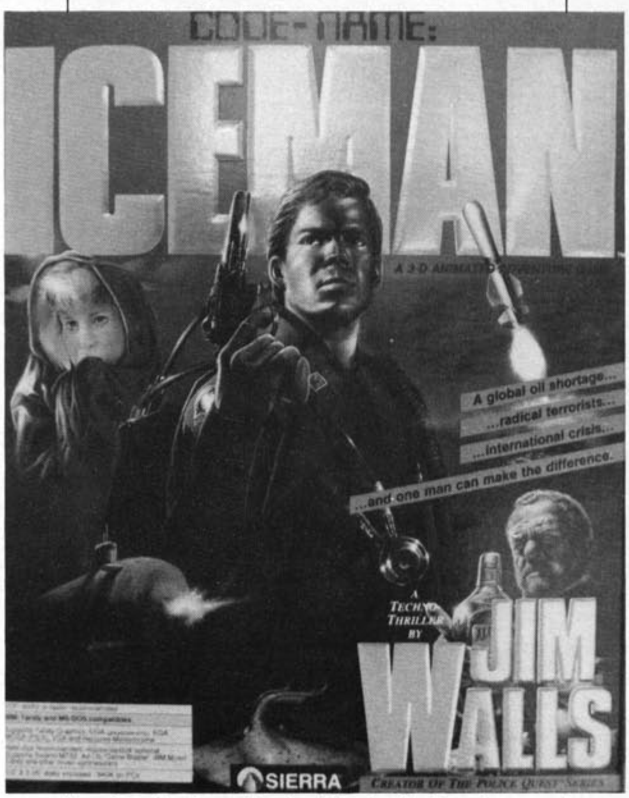
WASHINGTON D.C.—The White House today issued the following statement, "The Russian-supported radical terrorist group led by Jaharah Khommini Sieb Abdul has taken the U.S. Ambassador to the Middle East as hostage. They are demanding 10 Million dollars as ransom for the Ambassador to be released unharmed. If the ransom is not received within thirty days, they have vowed to shoot the Ambassador through the head and dump his body on the front steps of the American Embassy."

In response, The President issued a statement demanding the Ambassador's immediate release. He pledged that if the Ambassador was not freed within a reasonable amount of time the United States would not hesitate to take an aggressive military stance against the cowardly perpetrators.

The White House has put the 7th Fleet on full alert and has ordered them into the area. The formal statement said that this action has been taken in response to the Soviet Naval build-up in the Mediterranean, however, White House sources close to the Secretary-of-State have confirmed that this action has been taken to try to pressure the terrorists into releasing the Ambassador.

In *Code-Name: Iceman*, the Super Powers are pushing the world to the brink of nuclear war and you are the only person that can stop it. Iceman, **Sierra**'s latest release, takes the player from the sun-splashed beaches of Tahiti to the halls of the Pentagon and beyond. As secret agent Johnny Westland, a member of an elite U.S. Navy SEALS (Sea, Air, Land) commando team, the player must journey undetected into enemy territory. Using a nuclear-powered attack submarine, a one-man diving vehicle and scuba gear, Westland must penetrate the electronic harbor surveillance of a hostile Middle-Eastern nation to reach his goal, a nest of fanatical terrorists armed with advance weaponry. If that is not enough, he must follow up his success by figuring out a plan to rescue the American Ambassador and effect an escape unharmed.

As one begins to play Iceman, one is immediately thrust into the world of espionage and intrigue, complete with beautiful women deadly adversaries and highly sophisticated technology and gadgets. As the story opens, players find their characters on a well-needed vacation. At this point, players should try a little exploration. Moving both to the east and the west should help Johnny get a feel for the area and find out where things are. He might even be directed to read his magazine; check out the hotel; or maybe, play some volleyball. As with all Sierra games, it is advisable for the



player's character to take, look at and read everything he sees (in some cases, items he doesn't see). As Westland, the player should check out the bar, have a drink, and dance with a lady (The animation in this scene is terrific and, after all, he *is* on R & R.). Don't forget, that as a secret agent, part of the job is to stay current with the world political situation. So, one should make sure that Westland reads the newspaper daily. Also, players should never forget that Westland is always on call and must be ready, at a moment's notice, to serve his country. So, he needs to check in with the front desk on a regular basis.

TITLE:	CODE-NAME: ICEMAN
SYSTEMS:	IBM
Sound Boards:	Roland Ad Lib, IBM, CMS and Tandy Sound
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Jim Walls
PUBLISHER:	Sierra Coarsegold, CA

Soon, it will become apparent that Westland must contact his commanding officer, General Braxton. He will immediately be recalled to the Pentagon for an emergency briefing where the upcoming mission will be outlined and all of the pertinent details surrounding his transportation and contacts delineated.

In order to win the game, players will have to repair, pilot, and plot the course for a futuristic nuclear attack submarine. This mixed genre game combines an adventure format with a futuristic nuclear submarine "simulator." This mixture of adventure and simulation should provide an additional dimension of enjoyment for Sierra's adventure game fans. In addition to the usual exploration, this game will require the player to guide this advanced stealth sub across the globe and into combat with enemy warships.

Perhaps the nicest result of this submarine sequence is that it helps to provide the player with a sense of total control as Johnny Westland navigates the Atlantic and prepares to penetrate the enemy harbor. He is ultimately responsible for infiltrating the harbor zone and avoiding its security devices.

In the course of the game, players should learn about working hand-in-hand with other branches of the government (including the C.I.A.). They should also become familiar with Navy terminology and the facets of decoding scrambled messages. Above and beyond all else, the player should learn Defensive Submarine Warfare Strategies as well as effective weapons and when to use them. When in doubt about procedure, it is helpful to refer to the U.S.S. Blackhawk Technical Manual which is included in the documentation.

Sierra continues to upgrade and develop its technology as can be seen by some new innovations made to their proprietary language SCI (Sierra Creative Interpreter). First of all, they have improved the parser control features and added more "point and click" interaction. Beyond the interface improvements, *Code-Name: Iceman* also supports over ten (10) different sound cards. This

Continued on page 52

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– M. Evan Brooks: Computer Gaming World

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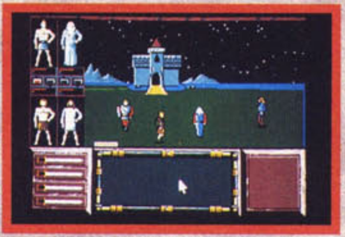
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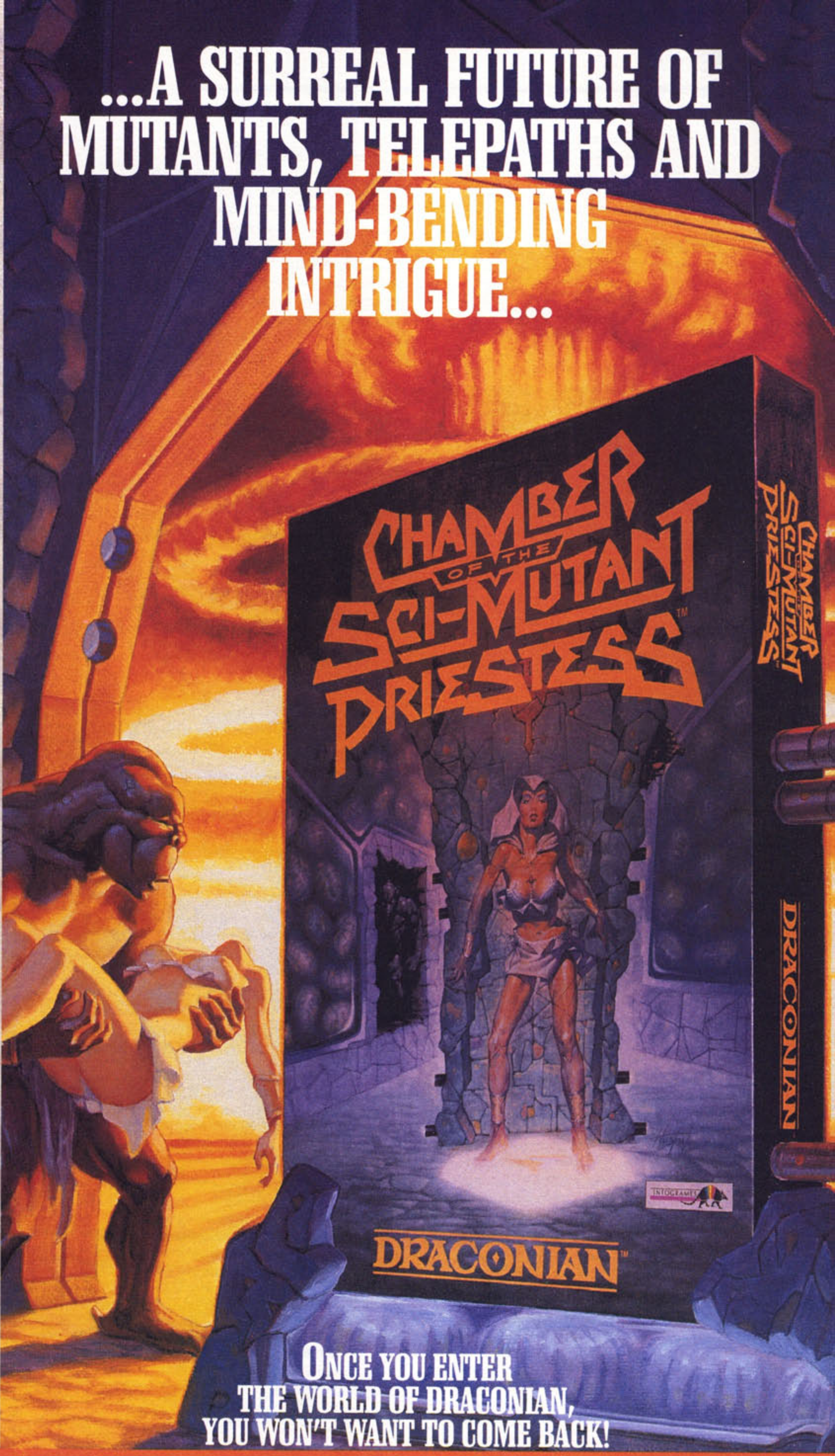
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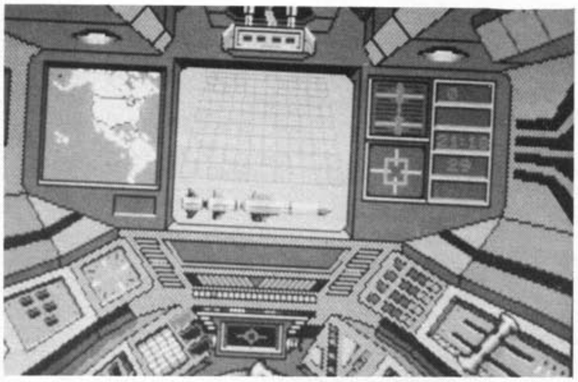
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ICEMAN

Continued from page 48

enables Mark Seibert's composing talents to really "come to the surface" with a musical score that is simply spectacular.

Deciphering The Code (Conclusions)



Written and designed by *Police Quest* creator Jim Walls, *Code-Name: Iceman* is basically a linear game. In order to win players have to accomplish one task after another. Players will find that there are a lot of layers to this game. After all, there is the normal adventure game rigors that Sierra fans have come to know and love and now there is the extra added perplexities of a submarine simulation.

Overall, the "Sub Simulator" is exciting. Although not as complex as thoroughbred simulations, this sequence offers a real-life quality due to the fact that it is interlaced within an adventure game. On the down side, there are a couple of points where a little *less* attention to detail would have given the game more playability. Specifically, the iceberg navigation sequence seemed too long and quickly became boring. The battle sequences however, combined with the exploration of the sub and the need to repair damaged equipment definitely helped to bring the pace back up to speed.

Aesthetically, the game has much to commend it. The artwork provided by lead artist, Sheryl Loyd, certainly adds a flair and panache to the game.

Finally, players will find that some of the puzzles are quite difficult. Fortunately, it is *not* one of those adventure games that can be completed in a couple of days.

Code-Name: Iceman has a lot to offer. If you are a regular Sierra fan or simply a regular guy/gal who likes James Bond Movies, this is a game that you will probably not want to miss. **CGW**

Classified Information (Warning: Specific Hints)

It is important to visit the bar while in Tahiti and to take Stacy back to her room for KISSES and "whatever". Have Johnny talk to her. She will tell him that she has lost an earring. Be sure to have him find it (She offers a clue about where to look.).

Once Westland is underway on the sub, it is important to remember that it is the Executive Officer's responsibility to insure the operational status of his vessel by inspecting and cycling all equipment in the four (4) main areas of the sub (i.e. Control Room, Machinery Room, Torpedo Room, and the Engine Room).

When the submarine captain locks Johnny's orders in his safe, make sure Westland gets the combination. He will need the briefcase at a later point to aid in decoding the C.I.A. radio messages. When looking at the microfiche, A = Army, N = Navy, AF = Air Force and M = Marines. Since "N" stands for Navy and the number next to it is 3, you must add 3 to each number in the radio message. The number is derived from the codebook found in Westland's quarters. These numbers will give you the page number, line number and word number of the primary and secondary words. Once the player has the key words, they must be fed into the computer which may be found in Westland's quarters. Remember, all coded numbers are in the range of 0-9. If a number goes over 9, the player must use what's left over and start counting again from 0.

When inspecting the machine room, have Westland examine all the machines. He must become familiar with the lathe, drill press, and the grinder.

When playing Boss Dice, beware, the game only lets the player save twice. It seems that the odds skew towards the game and not the player. Fortunately, the saving grace of the dice game is that one does not have to play it through to the end. The reward at the end of the sequence is an electronic device that will provide easy access to the harbor, later in the game. Yet, the clever player might find another way.

When under attack from enemy warships, the player should not forget to dive deep and run silent. The Blackhawk is equipped with the latest in electronic noise eliminating transducers, so one should reduce speed and wait until the enemy fires his weapons. They will not be able to find the Blackhawk if the sub is deep and quiet enough. Then, when the enemy is close, "lock on" to his ship and fire the Blackhawk's torpedoes. Of course, one should not fire weapons when the enemy is *too* close because doing so will give away the player's position. The enemy warships must be destroyed before they are maneuvered directly over the sub. It will take three (3) hits to sink an enemy ship.

Also, do not overlook the use of decoys. The player should use them when enemy torpedo impact is imminent or when the player needs to fire weapons and enemy torpedoes have been launched.

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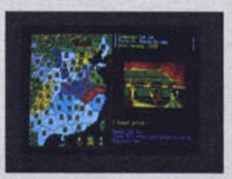
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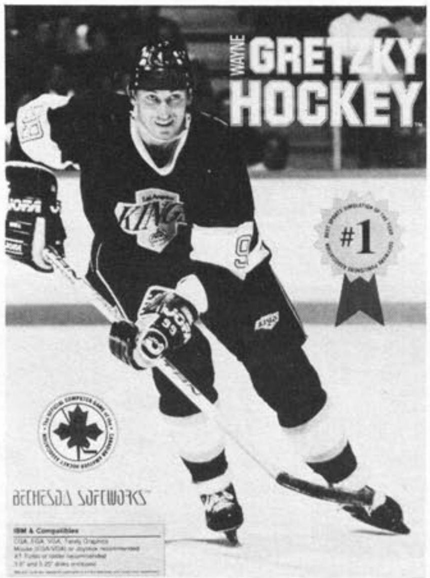
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The "Great One" Gets Greater

Bethesda's "Hockey League Simulator"

Now that *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* allows players to center the lines of their favorite NHL teams and score against their most hated rivals, what more could hockey fans ask? They could feasibly ask for the chance to play a full season of the most realistic hockey simulation available, complete with the capacity for: keeping individual and team statistics, consumating player trades, making personnel and roster decisions, developing league schedules and allowing the computer to play the games which the players themselves do not wish to play. If that is what they would ask for, their wish is **Bethesda Softworks**' command. The *Hockey League Simulator* (Amiga—$29.95, IBM—$34.95) (hereinafter *HLS*) allows players to manage their own leagues *and* incorporate actual games of *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* into those leagues.

The good news is that *HLS* offers its own play value. Even if one did not want to play out *any* games using *WGH*, it is fascinating to play general manager and abstract a season for one's favorite team. This reviewer had a marvelous time trying to make the Quebec Nordiques into a competitive NHL team. As GM, one can



establish the budget for the hockey club; fire the coach, when necessary; and activate players from the minors to compensate for any injuries among the rostered players (or allow the veterans some time in the minors for "conditioning"). With regard to personnel decisions, one is not taking a shot in the dark, since *HLS* provides the same statistics/ratings for minor league prospects as for the NHL personnel.

As coach, one has the opportunity to set lines (even strength, power play and short-handed lines, just like in *WGH*). The program even features an AI to act as "coach" in setting the lines for the non-human coached teams in the games which are to be abstracted by *HLS* rather than played out in *WGH*.

The bad news is that *HLS* does not offer an artificial intelligence to simulate the other general managers. So, if a human general manager wants to consummate a trade, it is necessary to toggle another team to human control and make the trade himself. Thus, there is no "check and balance" in the trade mechanism if one happens to be simulating league action in solitaire mode.

With the ability to handle all of one's league statistics, import results of *WGH* games into the *HLS*, and capacity for making GM-style decisions, *HLS* is a must for the computer gamer who likes hockey. **CGW**

WIN A Trip to Los Angeles and Meet Wayne Gretzky!

Join with **Bethesda Softworks** and *Computer Gaming World* in our search to find the finest managerial mind in professional hockey today.

Announcing the *Hockey League Simulator* competition. The top 50 entries will receive a T-Shirt and the *grand prize* will be a trip to Los Angeles to attend an L. A. Kings game and meet Wayne Gretzky.

All you need to do is use the *Hockey League Simulator* to design your own "Dream Team". After recruiting the ultimate hockey squad, simply send in a copy of your team disk to **Bethesda Softworks**. In December, 1990, these teams will be pitted against each other in a single elimination play down tournament. When the shaved ice settles, we will have one Supreme Manager and his Championship Team.

HLS Competition Rules

1. Participants use the Bethesda Softworks' *Hockey League Simulator* and the 87/88 NHL DataDisk (included in the *HLS*) and design what they think will be professional hockey's most competitive squad.

a) Your team must contain 20-25 players, have 3 centers, 3 left wings, 3 right wings, 6 defensemen and 2 goalies. You can include up to eight additional players at any position. The computer will draw upon these players as needed.

b) The overal team strength, shown by the team editor function of *HLS* cannot exceed 1,800 points total. If you choose to include fewer players of greater strength and, because of injury, your team falls below 20 players, Bethesda will sub in scrub players with an overall rating of 55 points.

c) You can make NO changes to the ratings assigned to players in the 87/88 NHL DataDisk included with *HLS*. Any change to these ratings will result in immediate disqualification.

d) Teams should be saved and named, using your first initial, middle and last initial. The file, where your "team.doc" is stored, should be assigned the same name.

2. All entries must be postmarked by November 31, 1990 and should be sent to:

HLS Competition
Bethesda Softworks
P.O. Box 7877
Gaithersburg, MD 20898

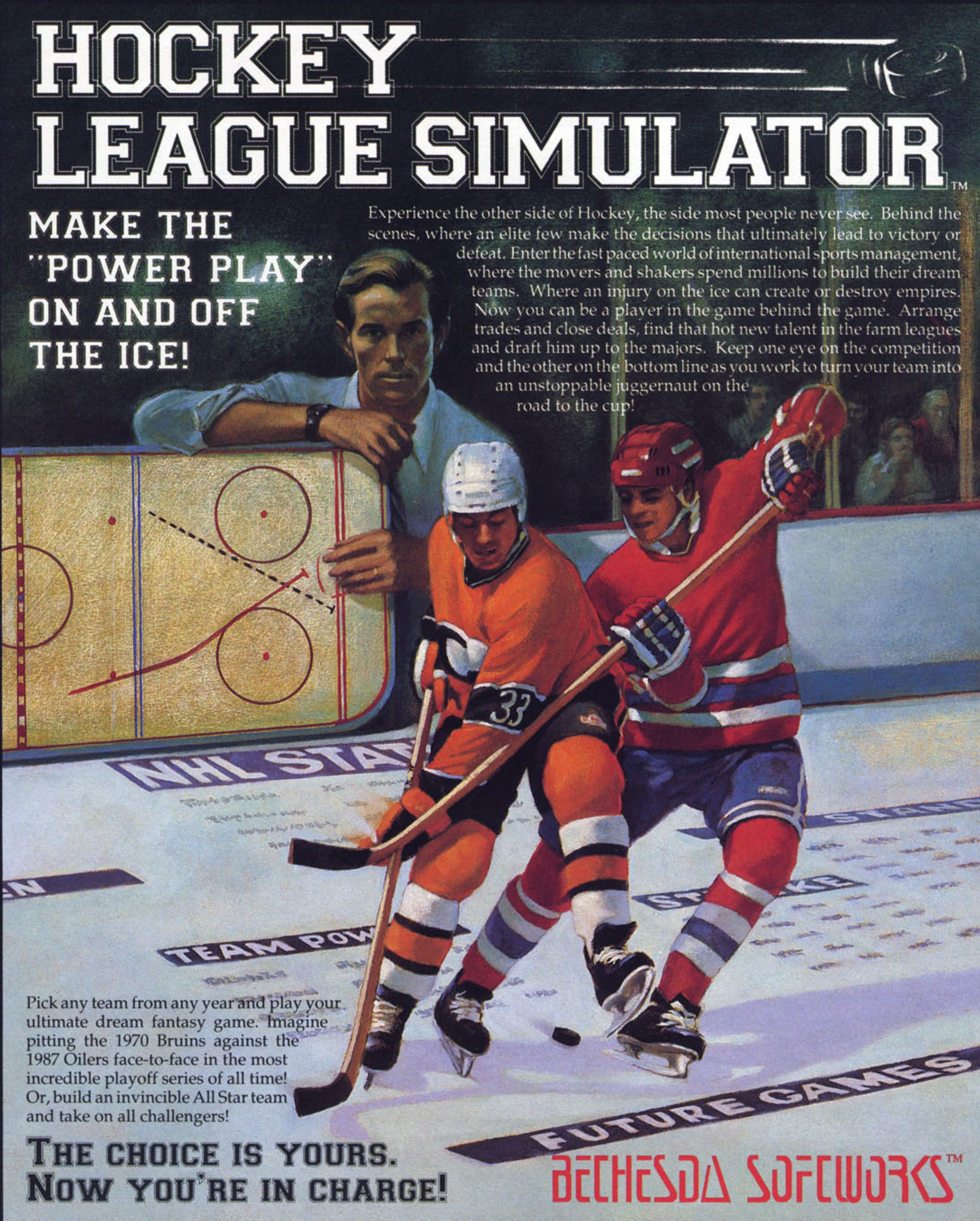
All disks received become the property of Bethesda Softworks and cannot be returned.

3. Your disk must be clearly labeled with your name, address and phone number. To be eligible to enter, Bethesda must have your warranty card on file. You are allowed to return your warranty card with your entry.

4. The play-down tournament will start December 1, 1990. The winner will be notified prior to December 24, 1990. The trip to L.A. to see the Kings game and meet Wayne Gretzky is scheduled for late January, 1991. There will be 250 runner-ups who will receive an "I participated in the 1990 Hockey League Simulator tournament" consolation prize.

5. Results of the tournament will be reported in *Computer Gaming World* "The Definitive Computer Game Magazine".

6. Employees, or the families thereof, of Bethesda Softworks, Media Technology, Ltd. and Golden Empire Publications, are not eligible to enter. Void where prohibited.



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CGW's Top Ad Award Winners

Last January CGW sponsored its second annual TOP AD Awards to honor the best advertisements in the computer game industry. Forty nine companies joined in the competition.

CGW readers were asked to vote for the best advertisements in the issue. They were asked to "consider the graphics, copy, and overall impact" of each ad. To encourage readers to vote for the best ads (instead of their favorite games contained in the ads) a prize of $250 and a lifetime subscription to CGW was offered to the contestant who came closest to picking the exact order of finish. Over 700 readers voted.

In the "Full Page or Spread" Category top honors went to **Koei** for their two page spread "Experience Japan's Greatest Strategy Simulations". Bill Swartz, then Marketing Director at Koei, hired Vince DeNardo, then art director at Computer Gaming World, to design the ad. CGW readers approved of the result with their votes. Bill has since moved on to Mediagenic and Vince has defected to Interplay. (It should be interesting to see what those two companies come up with for the Third Annual Top Ad contest next January). Meanwhile Koei continues to run the award winning ad, apparently still drawing well.

Lucasfilm Games came in a close second in the full page category with their beautiful and informative "Battle of Britain. Up Close and Personal" ad. Third place went to **Access Software** for "Crime Wave" (five screen photos and a vulnerable blond babe). You may recall that another "blonde babe" ad won in 1989's contest (Accolade's "European Rush Hour Ad").

In the Fractional Page category **SubLogic** and **Microillusions** again proved that four color ads out pull black and white ads. Sublogic's striking UFO ad dominated Top Ad voting in this category. Microillusions "Scooby Doo/Spacewaste" four color layout was a distant second. Coming in third place (for the second year in a row) was **Cyborg Games** for their "The Next Empire" ad.

Sau-Wing Yu of Seattle WA correctly picked five of the six winners. As CGW's Top Ad Voter, Sau-Wing will get a check for $250 and a lifetime subscription to Computer Gaming World. Congratulations to all our winners. See you next January for the Third Annual CGW Top Ad Awards.



Full Page Winners

1st: Koei

453 pts

2nd: Lucasfilm

429 pts

3rd: Access Software

313 pts



Fractional Page Winners

1st: SubLogic

961 pts

2nd: Microillusions

611 pts

3rd: Cyborg Games

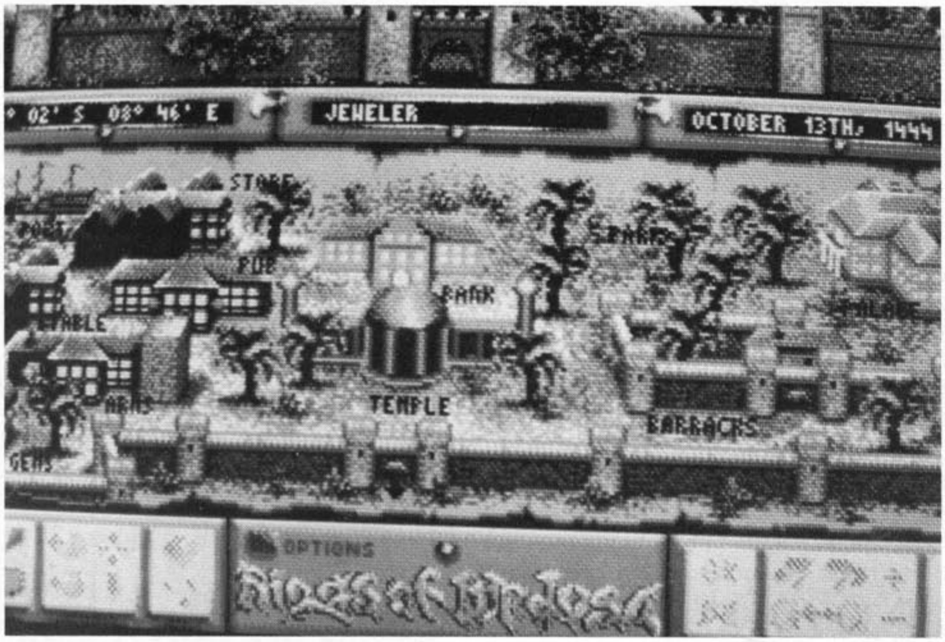
253 pts





Rings of Medusa

Continued from page 43



this area of the game is greatly appreciated.

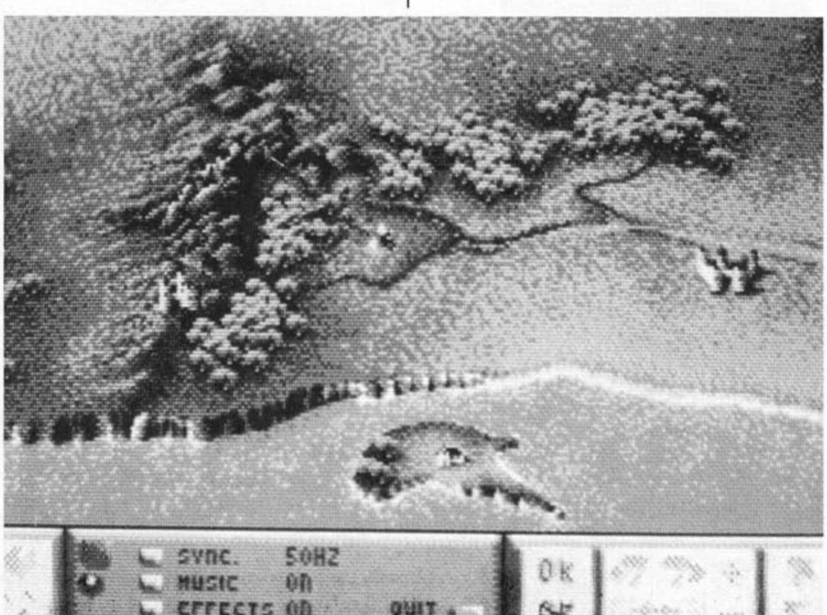
In addition, the game has a pleasant appearance. The topographical map is pleasing to the eyes and allows easy recognition of the various towns, hills, and other landmarks. The town menu is similarly sharp, with the various shops easily identifiable.

I also enjoyed the inclusion of mines as a potential source of income. This feature allows players who have already amassed considerable savings to use their money to further increase their profit, while saving themselves from the tedious process of trade.

Bad Points

Unfortunately, while the graphics are polished, the *rest* of the game is in marked contrast to the graphics. Trading is extremely difficult due to the fact that the player can be attacked at any time, virtually without warning, and lose all his goods. The manual states that this can be avoided by purchasing scouts to point out enemy armies at a distance, but this is impractical. The player initially lacks the funds to purchase the necessary scouts to explore an area wide enough to provide adequate warning. Also, even if one spots an army, it cannot necessarily be avoided.

Perhaps, the greatest weakness in *Rings of Medusa* is lack of realism. The game seems to have received little playtesting, as glaring oversights in credibility are apparent. For example, while cargo takes up space in wagons and ships, every type of cargo takes up the same amount of volume. Thus, a huge Mining Machine takes up the same amount of space as a single sheet of parchment! Also, the player will quickly note that he is the *only* active force in the entire economy. As the years pass, goods will continuously be produced, and soldiers continuously multiplied. In a few dozen years, the amount of soldiers in the "Park" awaiting recruitment can double or triple the population of the entire town. At the same time, towns which previously boasted 50 or 60 horses will have amassed 300, 400 or more.



One must also consider the poor handling of time within the game. There is no time limitation built into the game since the player can continue playing for hundreds of game years without penalty.

Also, the game interface is poorly designed. Movement on the map, accomplished via the mouse, feels very unnatural as the marker on the map follows a literal line to the mouse, rather than allowing the player to trace his path to his destination. In the same vein, the passage of time in the game is much too fast. Several days can pass before the player can even get his mouse ready to send his people to the next town. Since armies must be paid every month, this is very annoying. It would have been much better had the game based time on actual distance traveled, rather than real-time. Further, the game refuses to recognize a second drive, which makes saving the game an arduous, disk-swapping task.

Frankly, this reviewer can find no way to recommend *Rings of Medusa*. While the game has a promising premise (a fantasy-based strategy game), and decent graphics, the entire design seems unprofessional and plagued with problems. *Rings of Medusa* is highly unrealistic, lacks a good interface, and seems to lack playtesting. All in all, *Rings of Medusa* seems an unfinished game with a need for a major overhaul. **CGW**

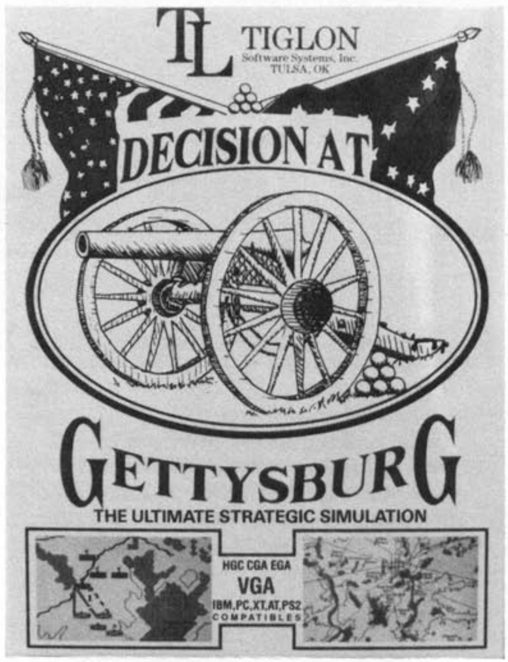
Decision At Gettysburg

First Wargame from a New Company

by M. Evan Brooks

Decision At Gettysburg (*DAG*) is a "strategic simulation" of the most famous battle of the American Civil War. Geared to the "hard-core" gamer/simulationist, this product is one of the first "traditional" wargames to appear in VGA-graphics. As such, the unit counters and terrain are extremely attractive. However, the question remains: is the beauty only skin-deep or is this simulation at the cutting edge of computer simulation?

The advertising campaign of *DAG* pits it squarely against **SSI**'s *Gettysburg: The Turning Point*. Although both products cover the same battle, they do so from entirely different perspectives (DAG covers a more operational area [147 square miles] while *Gettysburg: The Turning Point* is more oriented to the actual battle itself). Perhaps more importantly, **SSI**'s product was designed for the 8-bit computer in 1986. While board game design may evolve at a slower pace, computer simulation designs generally reach functional obsolescence within two years. Thus, the comparison between these products is somewhat misleading.



TITLE:	Decision At Gettysburg
SYSTEM:	IBM with 640K
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Jeffrey R. Wickersham
PUBLISHER:	TigLon Software 4308 S. Peoria Avenue Tulsa, OK 74105

Documentation

The documentation of DAG is a total of twenty-one half-pages along with an attractive reproduction of a nineteenth century map of the Gettysburg region. As such, it covers the basic mechanics, but offers few examples and no real elucidation of the meeting engagement that has, historically, become known as the Battle of Gettysburg.

Since this simulation covers the 147-square mile region around Gettysburg, it is a rare experience to encounter a battle unfolding reminiscent of the historical battle. However, one now has the opportunity to use the Southern cavalry in a better role than Jeb Stuart's "Glory Jaunt" around the Union flank in Hannover.

Of course, utilizing this additional capacity for strategic planning also means that the meeting engagement may well occur miles from the historical battlefield. While SSI's Gettysburg game also generated a different orientation than the historical battle, its smaller map scale compelled a slightly more "familiar" feel. This is *not* to say that DAG's perspective is erroneous, but rather to point out that one engages in a classic meeting engagement in the *vicinity* of the Gettysburg battlefield rather than necessarily over the actual historical terrain.

The hard-copy map included with the program is virtually useless. While it does give an overall perspective of the AO (area of operations), it is difficult to read and even more difficult to use with the simulation. Since the simulation uses an X-Y coordinate system to determine unit position, a map with such coordinates might have been more appreciated.

Overall, the documentation is marginally adequate as to play mechanics and less than adequate in the areas of operational/tactical guidelines and historical perspective.

Graphics

There is no question that DAG's graphics are striking. Units are crisp and easily discernible, and ground terrain/vegetation is colorful and clear. However, the entire playing area comprises fifteen "maps", thereby entailing much scrolling to view and move troops. Further, when the border of the visible screen is reached, an annoying flicker results as the map "redraws" itself.

DAG takes every bit of RAM available. When the documentation orders one to remove all terminate-and-stay-resident programs, it does mean *all*—even a mouse driver will cause the program to abort upon loading as it "unzips" itself.

Also, terrain is noted to the nearest one hundred feet. Since this is true, one wonders why a full digit height (i.e. "300'") could not have been used rather than the "xx" of the program (i.e. "3xx").

Finally, when exiting the program, the graphics mode changes to a much less crisp resolution in a "C-prompt". One may resume normal mode by rebooting or typing "mode CO80". This reviewer was impressed by the initial graphics appeal of DAG, but the limitations in the remainder of the program make the overall conclusion less attractive.

Game Play

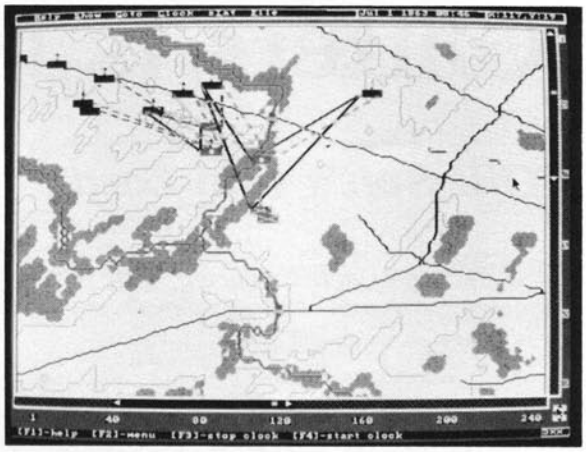
After the attractiveness of the initial screen displays, the first thing one notes is that unit movement is solely by keyboard input (arrow keys). Since the overall playing field is equivalent to fifteen (15) screens, this can quickly become tedious. Also, when moving an entire corps, accomplishment of this by individual division/brigade can be an exercise in patience.

DAG is a "real-time" program. Time marches inexorably on, and the unwary commander may well lose track of important events occurring in other areas of the battlefield. Fortunately, one can pause the program in order to catch up. While this partially defeats the "real-time" perspective, it does make the game more playable.

Units may be displayed as always visible or hidden. While the grognard will utilize the latter option, this reviewer strongly recommends the use of the visible option in a learning mode.

Note that DAG is for one or two players. To some degree, this is not extremely significant, but it does prevent the player from using a computer-only mode to discern playing tactics.

Also, the addition of some mini-scenarios might have encouraged a better user-facility with the program (e.g. Chamberlain and the 20th Maine's stand, Pickett's Charge, or even the historical second day deployment).



Subtitled "A User-friendly Strategic Simulation", DAG literally begs for mouse implementation. This reviewer's discussions with company president Robert C. Knudson led to Tiglon's recognition of certain modifications which would make the program more "user friendly". These are currently in process and include a two player modem version, as well as an escort command (in which the player will have "the option to identify other units in the immediate area of the escort unit. These units will follow along the same path and speed as the escort unit . . . " The escort version should be available momentarily (Version 1.2) and registered owners will receive the mouse version when it becomes available.

Certain other anomalies should be noted. Time literally ceases between 8:30 PM and 5:00 AM. While little fighting actually occurred in periods of darkness during the war, entire corps were moved up to the battle lines. This may also be taken into account in later versions. Finally, victory conditions are based upon destruction of the enemy army, i.e. the first army to become demoralized (after circa 35-40% losses) will be defeated. General Robert E. Lee did not intend to fight a pitched battle in the hostile Northern environs. Instead, his excursion may be more akin to a raid in force. His main objective was to threaten the North and obtain foreign recognition for the Confederate cause. Such recognition could well have achieved Southern independence and led to the establishment of customs borders along the Mason-Dixon line. Thus, from a strategic perspective, the destruction of the Army of the Potomac, while desirable, was not worth the risk of the loss of the Army of Northern Virginia.

As the simulation unfolds, the South must quickly destroy the Union forces if they expect to achieve a coherent and viable defense. Union forces must trade space for time, as they seek to counteract the South's initial manpower advantage. However, battle tactics must be carefully implemented. For example, cavalry charges against emplaced infantry and artillery are predestined for defeat.

The player should pause the game to examine his unit status. Combat results occur only when units are in contact and the player will often realize the brittleness of a particular unit only when the message, "!!! Warning: One of your Major Units has been completely crushed" has been received. Judicious game pauses and relief in place will lead to battlefield success.

Conclusions

Decision At Gettysburg is the first product from a new company. It attempted to do much and has actually achieved some of its objectives. The fact remains that it is currently cumbersome and awkward. However, its designers have shown a willingness to correct many of the deficiencies and, when this is done, DAG may well be one of the best operational computer wargames released. However, until version 1.2 is released, one can merely wait **CGW**

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

Esposito, Vincent J., *West Point Atlas of American Wars* gives an excellent map perspective of the army deployments leading up to and during the battle itself.

Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels* is an eminently readable novel about the Battle of Gettysburg—both historically accurate and touching.

Shelby Foote's *The Civil War: A Narrative*, Volume 2, transforms factual history into fascinating prose.

Hattaway and Jones' *How the North Won* offers both history and analysis of why the South lost its bid for independence.

Also, although Martin von Crevald's *Command in War* does not cover Gettysburg or even the American Civil War in particular, it does cogently analyze the difficulties inherent in meeting engagements which took place before the invention of radio communications.

All That Glitters Is Not Iron

UBI Soft's Iron Lord

by Allen L. Greenberg

In all of computerized medieval gaming-lore, there beats no heart more tortured by diversity than that of the Iron Lord. If the Iron Lord had any friends (which, by all accounts, he does not), they would probably call him "Iron." His description on "The Dating Game" might go something like this: "Iron enjoys archery, gambling, arm-wrestling, horseback riding, solving other people's problems, and making plans to send his uncle to hell." He is a young man, in the unenviable position of having lost his ancestral estate, as well as the dominion over the surrounding province to his murderous uncle. Following the death of Iron's father, a sympathetic family friend carried off "baby Iron" to be reared and trained as a knight. *Iron Lord* is the story of this knight as he returns to his land and attempts to raise an army to contend against his uncle's demonic followers. It's a computer game in which moments of intense arcade pressure alternate with adventure and decision-making.



TITLE:	Iron Lord
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari ST, and C-64
REVIEWED:	Amiga
PRICE:	$39.95
PUBLISHER:	UBI Soft
DISTRIBUTED BY:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA

The Field of Honor (Gameplay)

The game is organized into three phases, the first of which finds Iron sitting on the doorstep of the gutted-out ruins of his family manor. From there, he can find a half-dozen other locations to visit, in addition to the castle. With a few pieces of gold in his iron pockets, the young deposed lord can begin the difficult job of finding followers to help organize an army. Most of the characters he will encounter are preoccupied with problems of their own and are not interested in dropping these in order to go to war, even if it is against an army from hell. To gain the attention and respect of these people, Iron will find it necessary to enter and win some athletic tournaments. The hero must combine his success with some careful decisions in order to come across as a perfect leader. Only in this way will Iron secure the oaths of fealty necessary to emerge victorious.

The game's second phase is misleadingly referred to as the "final battle" (It is misleading because there is a confrontation which follows it). This phase is a movement/battle operation in which Iron's regiments are spread out like chess pieces opposed to the evil forces of his uncle. This second phase may begin at any time after Iron has recruited a bare minimum of soldiers. However, it unfolds more quickly and easily when Iron has secured at least eight or nine regiments in the first phase. The player is allowed six moves per turn, alternating with the computer-generated uncle's forces. The strength of each regiment, as well as the result of each confrontation, is graphically displayed in the screen corner as the phase progresses.

The third and final phase, which might have been called "blight at the end of the tunnel" is an arcade exercise which seems removed from the story which precedes it. Iron wanders through six sequential mazes gathering keys, weapons and mystic shields. In between the mazes, he faces space-invaderoid demons which will kill Iron provided they can penetrate the entirety of the mystic shields.

Iron Lord's graphics are fairly impressive. The color palette occasionally seems limited, but the overall result is pleasing nonetheless. The program also plays a pleasant variety of medieval music (in stereo where available) which is of the same high quality as the graphics. In addition to the music, the program produces some digitized grunts and other sound-effects to go along with the action.

Although adventure and strategy are important parts of *Iron Lord*, the gaming emphasis is clearly on arcade action. These sequences include an archery tournament in which the player selects a precise angle of firing and then simulates pulling back on the bow string. There is also an arm-wrestling sequence which may wear out more than one joystick, and sword-play with an assassin which is also quite demanding. A game of dice makes for an opportunity to win some spare gold. All of this take place, as does most of the adventuring, in the first phase of the game.

Foul, Varlet! (Complaints)

The primary problem with *Iron Lord* is that it is, at times, very

Continued on page 65

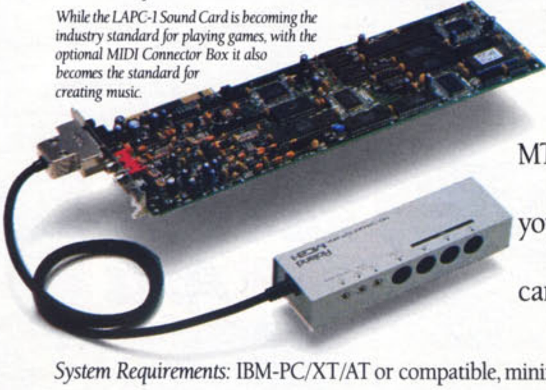
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IRON LORD

Continued from page 62

sluggish. The program may *not* be installed to a hard drive or into memory. Hence, the detailed graphics move frustratingly slow from the floppy disk onto the screen. Many sequences must reload over and over again each time Iron makes an error in judgement or fails in an arcade endeavor. It is also necessary for the hero to return to his home castle in order to save or restore a game in progress. This process slows things down even more for the player who chooses to use trial-and-error to solve a puzzle.

Finally, The documentation devotes too much space to the story which sets the scene for *Iron Lord*, and too few pages describing the demands of game-play. Some further description of the arcade action would have been particularly appropriate. The little which is present is often unclear.



Knight School (Hints)

The battle with the assassin is probably the most difficult arcade section in the program. Rapid movement of the joystick is necessary to out-maneuver the opposition. Players should particularly avoid *any* inactivity whatsoever during this section and keep Iron's sword moving at *all* times.

The arm-wrestling sequence also demands extremely rapid back-and-forth movement of the joystick. The controls for this sequence are so sloppy that players will be sorely tempted to perform some artificial method of speeding up the movement of their joystick (like disassembling it and operating the switches manually).

The Marshal's Judgment (Conclusions)

Purists who dislike having their favorite genre of software-entertainment intruded upon by another may find *Iron Lord* irritating, while gamers who are easily annoyed with unnecessary disk access may want to simply avoid the trouble. Nevertheless, it presents an entertaining story and offers reasonable enough gameplay so that most players will want to play the game through to the story's conclusion. In summary, *Iron Lord* is an above-average combination of adventure, strategy and action gaming. **CGW**

Scorpion's View

Continued from page 11

up when conversation starts. No two people look alike. However, in the full-size view, there are only a few different representations. So, at times, it's necessary to look around at people until you find the person you want (you see his or her face when you "look at" someone).

The new interface supports mouse or keyboard input. With the mouse, you click on one of a set of icons below the main viewing area on the left hand side of the screen. Using a keyboard, you would hit the appropriate letter key for the command you want. Function keys 1-8 replace the party stats in the upper right window with the stats or inventory for an individual member; and arrow keys are used to scroll through the inventory (which can be large for a strong member).

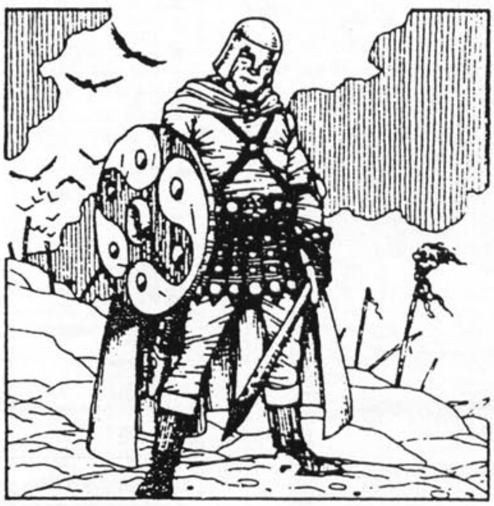
Items not used very often can be placed in bags or knapsacks to reduce inventory clutter. Clicking on the bag or sack shows the contents, which can, in turn, be taken out again, or moved to another member of the party. Any item, in fact, can be moved from one person to another, provided the recipient won't be overburdened.

Yes, the days of the "pooled inventory", when you could carry around countless items, are gone. Each character has a maximum weight load, in both equipment and items carried. This limit is based, naturally, on strength. You can wear/wield armor and weapons up to your strength in weight, and carry two times strength in items total (that includes your weapons and armor!).

On the whole, this new graphic system reproduces "real world feel" extremely well, once you get used to it. However, there is a debit side: the very size of the world makes some travelling rather tedious, especially on the sea. While there is a quick and easy way to visit any major town or shrine (see Hints for more on this), some places can only be reached the hard way, on foot or by boat, one step at a time (and that can be a lot of steps).

Dungeoneering has much the same drawback. Caverns and passages are so much larger in scale that exploring can become very time-consuming. I really missed the small, compact dungeons of previous Ultimas. Now, the dungeons are so large that even magic gems don't show you the whole level (that's big!).

Machine speed is another problem, which generally impacts the game when the party moves around. The more extraneous animation (animals or people moving, birds flying, etc.), the slower the response to movement of the party. At times, this can be excruciating, especially in dungeons, when the program is moving a number of creatures around (a flock of bats or insects, for example). The one good thing about this is: if you suddenly slow down, you know there's something out there waiting for you.



Since the world has changed, so, naturally, has combat. No more combat screen displaying your people on one side and the evil critters on the other. Things aren't quite so nicely arranged these days. The bad guys can come at you from almost any direction in the majority of encounters.

A new feature allows you to preset combat behavior for each member of the party, giving them the ability to fight individually. They have the ability to take up positions automatically at the front, flanks, or rear; retreat from harm's way; or go out and take on the nearest (or strongest) opponent.

However, they will follow this setting exclusively, regardless of what may be actually happening. If you have Dupre, for instance, set to guard the flank, that is what he does, even if the Avatar up front is being pounded into hamburger. Fortunately, even in the midst of fighting for your life, you can change the behavior to something more practical, including "Command", which gives you complete control over the member.

The presetting, therefore, works well in some situations, and not so well in others. Experimentation is necessary before you find out what is best for your team. Against a mixed group of opponents with a powerful monster in their midst, "Command" will ensure that everyone directs their attacks at the greatest threat. For lesser opponents, rear guard with missile weapons and Assault for the front line fighters is usually a good combination. My own preference, though, was to keep control of everyone. Old habits die hard.

You can break off combat at any time and try to run away, if the situation gets out of hand. Some monsters will try to follow you, but others will give up the chase after a short while. You'll find out which is which pretty quickly.

One problem with combat is that a monster may be in spell or missile range, but not clearly visible on screen. Sometimes, if you look hard enough, you can see some movement at the very edge of the screen, but this is easy to miss. They, however, can see you quite nicely, and you may find yourself hit with a spell before you even know there's trouble.

After combat, searching the remains (if any) is necessary to find treasure. This is usually in the nature of mundane weapons and armor, some gold, and the occasional ham or loaf of bread. If a body yields several items and what you want happens to be on the bottom, you can simply push the stuff you don't want aside. You aren't forced to take and, as a result, drop unwanted items.

The best thing about combat is that much of it is discretionary. How many times in a CRPG have you walked out of town, taken a few steps, and found monsters breathing down your neck (or biting into it, as the case may be)? You get rid of them, take a few more steps, and sure enough, more monsters.

That's silly. If so many of them were roaming around, the world would have been overwhelmed a long time ago. That doesn't happen in Ultima VI. The outdoors are virtually encounter-free. There are a few of them (troll bridges, for instance), but hardly enough to even bother counting. Mostly, you just have to avoid the occasional snake, and keep a guard when camping out to warn of wolves or similar natural critters. The *real* monsters are where they should be, down in the dungeons.

What this does is free you up to concentrate on getting things done, not fighting for your life at every turn. It is a tremendous relief, not to mention a leap forward in CRPG's generally, to be able to

Continued on page 68

Circle Reader Service #44

Scorpion's View

Continued from page 66

get on with the main goals of the game without a lot of excessive combat.

You will still be doing a fair amount of fighting, since this is how experience is gained for level advancement. Still, it will be happening more at times of your own choosing, when you feel ready for it, not when some random number generator decides to kick off an encounter.

Magic has a new style, too. First, you need a magic book to record your spells. Then, of course, you must buy spells and put them into the book (you do start with a few). Having reagents is still necessary, but now the game premixes them for you (based on your spell book), which is very handy. Finally, in order to cast a spell, you need to hold the book in hand (one hand; you can still have a weapon in the other).

There are also many new spells in the arcana. Yet in some ways, this effort seems wasted. The only really capable magician in the party is the Avatar, who gets two times Intelligence in magic points. Everyone else who is able to use magic gets only half "Intelligence" in points. In other words, there is no one of the Mage class to join your party.

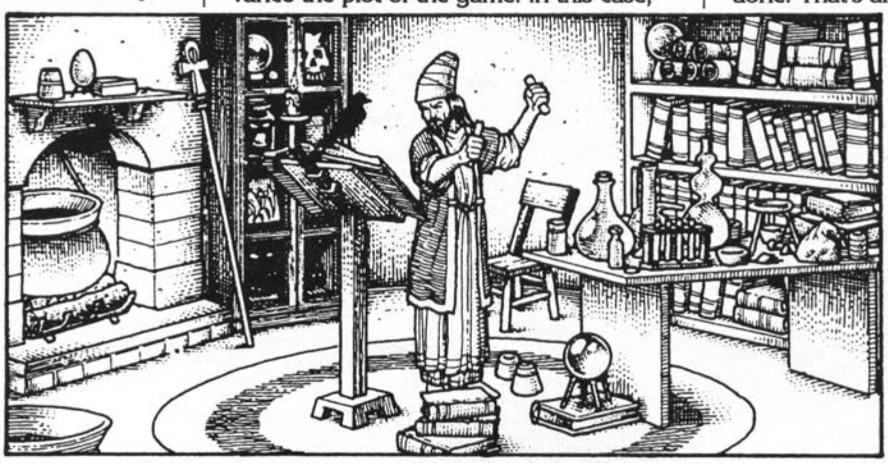
Conversations with the locals have been greatly enhanced. Now, talking to them is almost like talking to real people. Some of them have nothing crucial to tell you, but they will go on and on, just as real folks do (heh). Personality really comes through, too, whether someone has a lot or a little to say. Even some of the party will get into the act. Iolo, Dupre, and Shamino occasionally break into a conversation with comments or remarks of their own.

Better yet, there is a "help" feature in the game, that highlights most of the important keywords in a person's verbiage. So you no longer need to guess what words out of a paragraph's worth (or more) are the right ones to use. Much information can be gained quickly by using this feature, with far less frustration. You can turn the "help" off, but it's really better to keep it on.

There is a drawback with talking to people; it's called "Waiting for So-And-So". Everyone has a schedule that determines when they get up, when they go to work, when they eat, and when they go to bed. Not everyone has the same schedule, either. Some are early risers, others get up late.

It can become frustrating as you wait for a merchant to finish lunch so you can buy an important item, or for a bard to get out of bed so you can ask him a vital question. Waiting around, with nothing else to do (especially in the latter stages of the game), is very irritating.

Another irritation was "busywork". Busywork is something (often a long sequence of actions) that you do to achieve a goal whose rewards are not equal to the effort expended, and/or do not advance the plot of the game. In this case, the busywork is the pirate map.



You learn very early in the game that Mariah needs the second half of a stone tablet to translate a book that Iolo is dragging around with him. Eventually you find out you need a pirate map to tell you where to look for it. There are eight pieces to the map that you have to find.

This would be okay, if you found out something really vital, or if, at least, the pirate treasure was very good. Unfortunately, the treasure turns out to be rather bland. The contents of the book are interesting, but not crucial to the game's solution and, later on, you can learn the language and read the book for yourself anyway. Additionally, the person Mariah tells you to consult (after the translation) is someone you have probably already heard of and talked to.

It would have been far better if there had been fewer pieces, say four. The time involved then would have been much less and more in keeping with what you learn from the book. Otherwise, it would have been nice to have the book contain some *critical* piece of information, making the long and winding trail to the tablet be of greater worth. As it is, you could skip the entire pirate map business and never notice the difference.

Plot. I haven't said much about plot up to now and it's the storyline, not dazzling graphics or a fancy interface, that really determines the quality of a game. Does *Ultima VI* measure up in this respect?

You bet your sweet bippy! There is a *solid* story here, although a little shaky in some respects (the sudden flatness of the world is hard to believe, for instance). The second trilogy (IV-VI) is tied together; there are echoes of the first with cameo appearances by our old friends Mondain, Minax, and Exodus; and the finale continues the tradition started with IV, the non-violent ending.

The land of the Gargoyles is very nicely done. That's all I will say, since much of the game is built around finding out about them and what it is they really want. Obviously, they are more than they appear, but it is up to you to discover in your many journeys through the worlds.

Busywork, slowdowns, and long walks aside, *Ultima VI: The False Prophet* is a very good game. The world is more real, and more sensibly put together. Little "bits" enhance this, such as mice and snakes fighting it out in the wilderness, and the midnight brawls in some of the taverns. The interface is easy to use (once you get the hang of it), travel to most of the major points is effortless, conversation is more life-like, the graphics are remarkable, and the story well-thought-out (it is not easy to bring together three games that were not specifically designed as a trilogy in the first place).

If you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways: On Delphi, visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie, stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (Remember to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the US): Scorpia, PO BOX 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

Continued on page 74

Letters from Paradise



Loom and Doom

Loom was a *major* disappointment. *CGW*'s review should have said point-blank that the game was deterministic and linear, not just "easy." I spent $40.00 for six hours of play! No exploration at all . . . just follow the dangling carrot.

Chris Weaver
Louisville, KY

The *Loom* review was an excellent piece of work—an excellent piece of work—quite a pleasure to read.

Jon Brock
Greenville, SC

Actually, Loom *has not yet been "reviewed" by* CGW. *The "Sneak Preview" in April was an advance look at the game with particular attention to the style of game and design philosophy underlying it. Frankly, the sneak preview did state that the game was deterministic in that it stated, "The game is 'directive', . . ." and " . . . the player often has the illusion of freedom, . . ." (CGW #70, p. 14). The preview also noted that the way magic is handled was directive when it quoted Brian Moriarty as stating, "If it is not important, you can't touch it." (p. 16). The information in the sneak preview was evidently clear enough for the following readers.*

The "Loom Sneak Preview" gets an "F" because of paragraph 2. *[Ed: Mr. Lund apparently objected to the statement, "No, this is neither a description of the radical right holding the United States hostage, fundamentalist evangelicals holding the reins of our educational and religious establishments, nor the last vestiges of Communist Party members preparing for a counter-revolution."]*

Carl Lund
Bruno, MN

Starting a game review with several paragraphs of fictional "atmosphere" rarely adds to my enjoyment of the article. In fact, I find it a bit annoying. The "Loom" review *[Ed: preview]* introduction, on the other hand, was excellent. It drew the reader into the article in a thought-provoking way.

John Joerr
Cincinnati, OH

The fictional introductions are intended to do more than simply set the stage. At their best, they are intended to convey something about the game's fiction, flow and play. For example, "Breach of Conflict" (CGW #70, p. 34) begins with a narrative that actually describes a combat encounter in the game. It even references the important attribute and time factors which need to be observed during the combat. They are not intended to simply fill space.

Singapore Slings A Rebuttal

I have just finished reading my April issue of *Computer Gaming World* (#70) and would like to reply to Ernest Claridge's letter about his visit to Singapore.

The Funan Centre has two floors that have computer software stores on them and many of them sell pirated games. However, there are also many stores which sell original software. In fact, across the road, there is another mall with Telahin Enterprises, which is where I obtained my subscription for your magazine. This particular store was featured in a recent issue of *CGW* and has, several times, helped raid stores which sell pirated disks.

Singapore has a lot of stores which sell pirated disks, but also many which are devoted to selling original software. I think that Ernest's letter is saying bad things about Singapore and, especially the Funan Centre, and I do not want others who are coming to Singapore to expect every shop to sell pirated games.

Dylan Herbert
Singapore

Actually, Dylan, we are aware of and wholeheartedly applaud the efforts of Telahin and others in Singapore to reduce the flagrant piracy we lamented in our reply to Mr. Claridge's letter. No disparagement of Singapore nor the Funan Centre, in general, was intended. We wanted to broadside the "pirates", not the port.

Formal Persuasion

Please don't let your writers say, "This reviewer" anymore. It drives me nuts. A simple "I" is fine. Trust me.

Eric Kirchner
Florence, KY

Although CGW occasionally allows an informal conversational style when the subject matter or reviewer's perspective warrants it, this editor prefers use of a formal style whenever possible. In particular, the magazine's voice attempts to eschew, with a very few exceptions, reviews and other features which read, "First, you do this and then, you do that. You always avoid this and that." By adding a limited formality to our style, we continually remind ourselves that we are addressing an adult audience. According to our demographics, we are apparently succeeding in addressing that audience.

Hoist With Our Own Harpoon

In your April issue, you reported that *Harpoon* (Version 1.1) is bug free. It is not. In the bigger games, it will still crash when you try to compress time.

Perry Riechmann
Valmeyer, IL

*The strategy notes on page 20 (CGW #70) state, "*Harpoon *(Version 1.1) has been released, virtually bug-free and with smaller memory requirements." Although you are technically correct that, since the adjective "virtually" literally means "truly", we stated the program is bug free, please note that the current usage of the adjective means "practically" (*Harper Dictionary of Contemporary Usage*, p. 477). Witness the article on "Virtual Reality" in this issue as another example. We regularly use virtual and virtually as a "weasel word" to avoid blanket statements. Mr. Brooks meant that most of the bugs had been corrected.*

I enjoyed Mr. Brook's article, "HARPOON: Tactics & Strategy" in the April issue. I would, however, like to correct a mistake in the article. Mr. Brooks states, "In reality, a submarine cannot cease movement; like a shark, it must keep moving in order to maintain trim—a complete cessation of movement would force either upward or downward movement." In reality, submarines have variable ballast systems which allow the Diving Officer of the Watch to flood or pump water into or out of the boat. The water collects in tanks and adjusts the weight of the boat. The boat should always be neutrally buoyant. This allows the boat to slow to 0 knots when needed.

Submarines also have hovering systems

to help maintain neutral buoyancy at 0 knots. The hovering system uses a computer to sense the vertical motion of the boat and adjust the boat's variable ballast to maintain depth. This system helps during loss of propulsion casualties when the boat is forced to 0 knots.

While under the polar ice cap, you also use the hovering system. Submarines use a maneuver known as ice picking. You slow the boat to 0 knots under a thick part of the ice cap. The hovering system is adjusted to maintain a slow ascent. The boat will push up against the ice and settle. In this position, you become lost in the noise of the ice.

Submarines, then, do use 0 knot speeds. They occur inadvertently as casualties or intentionally as tactics. In either case, the systems are in place to handle and exploit this ability.

Glenn Kenney, LT USNR
Boston, MA

Point/Counterpoint of Purchase

Working in a software store gives me the golden opportunity to try out new game releases. To date, I find that *CGW* is the most accurate of all magazines concerning the trends in the computer gaming industry. Keep up the good work! Thanks.

Christopher S. Purdy
Appleton, WI

I used to use your magazine to help me choose which new computer games to buy. But lately, it seems that the games I see in the "Taking A Peek" section have been on the shelf for many weeks, if not months. Let alone the regular review, like on *Breach 2*, which I've had for several months.

I know lots of new games come out every month, but it seems you're falling WAY behind. I hope you can "catch up" soon.

Rick Weindel
Citrus Heights, CA

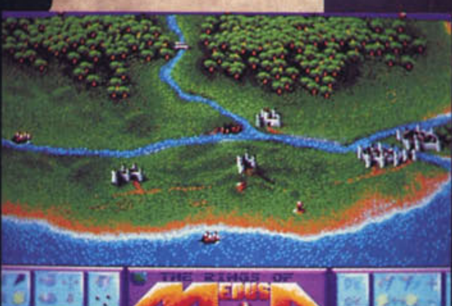
We are thankful that there are folks who appreciate the job CGW does with regard to covering both trends and games in the entertainment software industry. However, there are some unfortunate trends which mitigate against prompt coverage. First of all, we do not include a game in the "Taking A Peek" section of the magazine until we have a production copy in our hands. Since several companies ship review copies to the press up to two weeks after *they ship the games to the stores and the* earliest *they can appear in the magazine is a month and a half to two months* after *we get them, there is a necessary time lapse. Rest assured, however, that the appearance in "Taking A Peek" means that the products are "on the market". We do try to keep you current, however, with Consumer Electronics Show reports, buying guides, surveys and sneak previews. In fact, most people think we tend to have the most timely coverage available.*

CGW











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Balance of the Planet

Continued from page 19

the issue in the player's hands. He allows the player full access to all of the game's variables and makes it possible for the player to change the potentially biased factors. Each of the 150 formulas in the game has an optional background screen which explains the mathematics and reasoning behind the formula and allows the player to alter the variables with the click of the mouse.

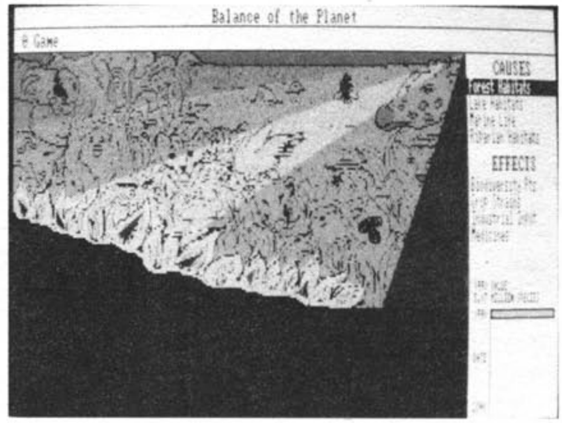
For instance, if the player feels that nuclear power is a safer and more viable option than popular opinion or Crawford presents, the player can change the variables to reflect that view. The player can alter the probability of nuclear accidents, the amount of damage a radioactive release causes in terms of lives and the rate at which nuclear energy becomes more widely used.

It is a sneaky, but powerful solution to the problem as it adds another level of value questioning and creation. Several of the equations call for determining the value of a human life. It may be offensive to some to consider a point value for a human being, but as Crawford states in the documentation: "If we can't make life and death decisions on a rational basis, how then can we make them?"

A provocative caption on one formula, typical of Crawford's gadfly nature, reads, "Here again I am asking you to place a value for the life of a human being. In this case though, the human being in question is poor, lives in a faraway place and speaks a strange language. Perhaps his life isn't worth as much?"

Seeing Through Nuke-Tinted Glasses

In addition to creating their own biases, players can play using pre-created biases. By loading the Pro-Nuclear, Environmentalist, Industrialist, or the Third World perspectives, the player can manage the world from that point of view. When playing the Pro-Nuclear scenario, nuclear energy is the panacea for the world's energy needs and its dangers are minimized. Or, when playing from the Third World perspective, success lies in meeting the needs of the poor majority on the planet. Playing each scenario gives one a broader view of the differing factions in the environmental battlefield.



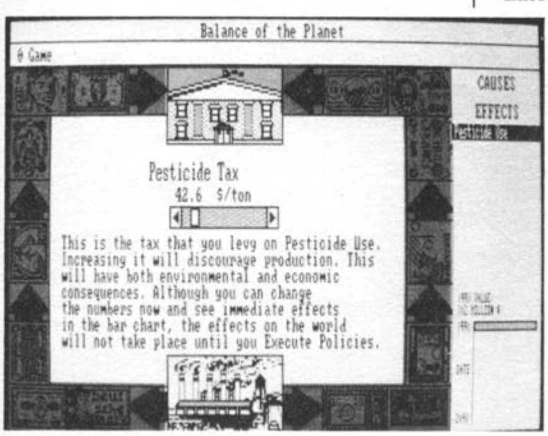
Ecology 101

Balance of the Planet is a tough game. The average score for a first game is around -10000 points, in other words, complete failure. This is intentional. Crawford does not want people to think that they can sit down and solve the world's problems in a half hour. This evil wizard of consumption combined with pollution will not fall with the stroke of a broadaxe and the blast of your favorite wand. This wizard is very big, very ugly, and, in this fantasy universe, nothing is *ever* black and white.

Of course, the game *is* a tremendous educational resource. The documentation is a wonderful. It is practically a textbook of environmental issues. It makes interesting and informative reading and bears Crawford's distinctive style throughout. We must compliment Crawford on its thoroughness and clarity.

Instructive Criticism

Is Balance of the Planet fun? No. It is, however, a game with a message —a game designed to affect change in its players. It is the most explicit example to date of the game designer/artist's view of the computer as a tool for social change. It is a fulfillment of this messianic agenda and, in that sense, it is the closest thing to "art" to be sold as computer entertainment. This game is simply not going to have you leaping out of your chair and throttling your CRT in excitement, but it may well change the way you live in regard to your world. At the very least, it may get you to think about it.



Frankly, Chris has missed an important point. Before you can educate, you must entertain. You must engage the player as fully as possible. Only during those peek gaming experiences (that only the great games provide) where you lose track of time, where all of life's priorities suddenly lose precedence and you have the gamer's entire attention, are they receptive to any message the designer may have. Without this engagement, the message has no power.

Balance of the Planet is a noble effort. It has very important concepts to teach, but it is just not fun. It is not a gaming experience that engages one *as* a gamer. Indeed, at times, it seems more like a bunch of formulas that have a secret combination that can only be deciphered by educational but boring iteration. You don't know how much I want to say that BOP is a wonderful game. After all, it was wrought from wonderful intentions and has an important message. Further, I respect the designer for having the courage to risk everything for his convictions. Still, if the game is not fun, it simply wouldn't be right to endorse it for gamers who expect to be entertained by their entertainment software.



Scorpion's View

Continued from page 68

A Lost Scroll of Britannian Wisdom

Ultima VI Tips As Told By Scorpia

Lore of the Ubiquitous Arachnids (Special Bug Note): Early releases of *Ultima VI* are known to be definitely buggy. Problems include bizarre graphics, vanishing inventory items, and game freezes, lockups or crashes at certain points or under certain conditions. You should check your version of Ultima VI by using control-V after booting the game. The number should be 3.2 or higher. If it's less than that, you should return the game to **Origin** for replacement (*especially* if it's 1.7).

Geographic Orientation: The first thing to do (after helping yourself to whatever you want from the castle), is to learn how to use the Orb of Moons. It can take you to any of the eight major towns and shrines, and cuts down enormously on travel time in the game. Altogether, there are 24 positions for the red moongate. Make sure you find them *all* (two of those positions will not actually take you anywhere, but it's nothing to worry about).

When you know how to get around quickly, visit Yew and buy some swamp boots for your party. These nifty items allow you to walk safely through swampy ground, thereby preventing poisoning. In Moonglow, you should buy a sextant. This invaluable instrument, when used with the latitude and longitude lines on the cloth map, will always give you your exact position in the world. It is especially helpful for relieving your mind on long ocean trips, proving that you're really moving (grin).

One place you should get to early on is Cove. Very important information can be learned here. The difficulty is the proximity of the Shrine of Compassion and its attendant Gargoyles. You may want to try sneaking in by skiff along a water route when you get close.

Since there is no real difference between a ship and a skiff, except for the ship's cannons, it makes sense to do your water journeys of all kinds with the skiff. The skiff, while heavy (25 stone!) can be picked up and taken with you. There are many places in the game where having a skiff with you can be of great help. Poor Dupre, as the strongest member at the time, was elected the Official Skiff Bearer of the party. It took up half his inventory allotment, but it was definitely worth it.

Enlisting Adventurers: Who you have in the party (aside from the trio of Shamino, Iolo, and Dupre) is up to you. Most of the people ready to join will be of the fighter variety; I could find no true mage in the game to become a member. Even Mariah wasn't interested (well, maybe she had enough last time out).

On the other hand, offensive spellcasting is not all that necessary in most instances. The majority of opponents can be handled quite nicely with good old hack-and-slash, and perhaps a judiciously-cast spell or two. Two weapons that I found surprisingly effective were slings and boomerangs (this obtained only from Gargoyles).

They were especially good against minor critters such as bats, rats, wolves, spiders and the like: the sort that are easy to kill but you hate to waste good arrows and crossbolts on. Slings never run out of ammunition, and boomerangs always come back (the closest thing to the beloved magic axe of yore in the game). You can even use these in close-up combat, avoiding the need for quick weapon changes in many cases. Against something really powerful, such as dragons, however, you will want weapons with better damage ability.

The Dragons of Destard: The dragon cave (Destard) is full of tough, mean, nasty critters. The dragons are not pushovers. They have strength in excess of 50 (yours can only go up to 30), are fast, somewhat resistant to spells, and fond of casting their own ("Chain Bolt", in particular).

A few of the latter and you can be in trouble pretty quickly. Unless you're going in there *specifically* to fight for experience, stealth is the better way to go around. Invisibility rings, and the Mass Invis spell, are the best means of getting your party through intact.

Arcana: Speaking of spells, you don't need to have all of them to finish the game. In fact, I didn't use too many myself. Most useful in general were Heal, Great Heal, Unlock Magic, Dispel Field, Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Detect Trap, Untrap, Telekinesis, Disable, Mass Invisibility, Vanish, and Pickpocket. Explosion is handy if you don't feel like lugging powder kegs around.

There are only four people who have spells for sale, and none of their spells overlap. So, when you find someone with spells, "buy" in each circle to see what they have for future reference. Also, check out the prices of their reagents, so you know who has what and for how much.

Be careful when you drop things off for storage. It's tempting to use Lord British's castle, but too many items in the area can cause some to vanish, and may even prevent you from winning, if it's a unique object that disappears. Apparently, this is a pretty honest world and anything you leave in a town will always be there when you return. So don't be afraid to cache a few things in Britain or Jhelom or wherever. Just remember where you stored the stuff!

Ultimate Wisdom: NEVER BURY A MOONSTONE! You may be inclined to put a few in places that can't be reached with the Orb (such as Buccaneer's Den), but *don't* do it! At the end of the game, you *must* have all eight stones together. If any are buried, you will have to wait until both moons are down before you can retrieve the stone. That can mean a long wait (bet you wonder how I know that). On the verge of completion, I was forced to camp and camp and camp, waiting for the moons to go down so I could get back the one (good thing it was only one!) stone I had buried early in the game.

Lore Of Strange Encounters: When you go into the pirate cave after the pirate treasure, be certain that you have either a powder keg (you need only one) or the "Explosion" spell. If don't one of those, your trip will be in vain and you'll have to do it over again. This cave, by the way, is not the same as the one in Buccaneer's Den.

You might have a problem with Ephemerides and lenses. Whenever you ask him about lenses, his response is "what sort do you want?" and the conversation only goes in circles from there. It is best to stay off that subject until the proper time, to avoid frustration.

By the way, the glass sword is back. It is a pretty potent weapon that can only be used once, but delivers a devastating shot of 255 points worth of damage. This time, there are a number of them in the game and they can be extremely helpful when facing a dragon or similar tough opponent. However, I do advise you to hold on to one of them. You'll need it for something special late in the game.

Captain John in Gargoyle Land is very important. Until you find him, you won't be able to do much on the other side of the world. He is not easy to locate, since he camps out in a dungeon. Search for him among the mountains far to the southeast of the Tomb of Kings.

Of the three Shrines in Gargoyle land, only Diligence is likely to give you any problems. Here is where having a Wizard Eye or X-Ray spell is extremely useful. Otherwise, you'll have to be very diligent indeed to find what you're looking for.

Looking for dungeons on the cloth map can be difficult. I advise a bright light and a magnifying glass (really!). All dungeons are located in mountains, so concentrate your efforts there. They look something like black splotches (the dungeons, not the mountains!). There are more than the usual seven this time, so look carefully.

Some nice things and a lot of spider silk can be found in the Spider Cave southwest of the Abbey. The spiders are not especially difficult opponents, and the webs can be broken by hitting them with a weapon (any weapon).

Floor traps in some dungeons are a problem. They can not be revealed with Detect Trap, or undone with Remove Trap. Searching or digging where you know they are does nothing. Someone has to walk over it. At that point, the trap becomes visible, and can be pushed aside. Spikes are not movable (although visible); however, the Vanish spell will get rid of them.

The ghost in Skara Brae is something of a red herring; neither I nor anyone I know to this point who has finished the game was able to do anything about him. If anyone does manage to solve the murder, I'd like to hear about it (the Seance spell did nothing here).

Finally, in the *Ultima* tradition, Smith the talking horse is still not worth visiting (unless you don't have anything better to do). His "information" is not in the least important.

CGW

Taking a Peek

Continued from page 6

are rewarded with additional character abilities as they successfully struggle through the Five Ordeals, et al. The storyline, though short is fairly well knit together and the game features good enough graphics and sound so put an Amiga through its paces. Amiga ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

NORTH & SOUTH: Picture the epic grandeur of the hit mini-series and rest assured that this game is the furthest thing from it. Based on the French comic book "Les Tuniques Bleu", "North & South" offers arcade fun for the strategy game minded (or vice versa). The game offers zero to two player options with multiple difficulty levels and quick and clean play that features plenty of options, scenarios and variants for everyone. In fact, a pure strategy variation is even available for the wargamers among you. About as historically accurate as Mr. Peabody's "Wayback" machine (remember the episode with General Sherman?), "North & South" is twice as fun as a barrel of Lincoln logs. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404

LHX ATTACK CHOPPER: If you're looking for an arcade-style helicopter game with great graphics and sound, LHX could be the game for you. It is easy to learn and use, but it is *not* the simulation it purports to be. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

LOW BLOW: While other games (notably the coin-op hit "Punch Out" and Accolade's "TKO") also allow you to progress up the ladder to fight for the championship, the beauty (or ugliness, depending on one's point of view) of this game is the added dimension of fighting dirty. Using simple interfaces, each boxer has a dirty trick up his sleeve (or in his boot, as kicking is allowed) to go along with the swings and jabs. Use the dirty trick too often, however, and the fighter is disqualified. The graphics, animation and sound are all top caliber. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

SKI OR DIE: There's no fight like a snow fight. This arcade package of winter sports games is a youth-oriented action cartoon. Downhill skiing (with hairy stunts), snow 'tubing against the infamous Lester, Acro Aerials and snow boarding join the snowball fights as you encounter punk penguins and bunnies with chainsaws. If you're hip, dude, this game is loads o' snow blown fun (totally). IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #9.



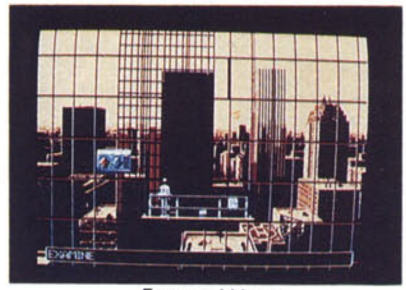
LHX Helicopter



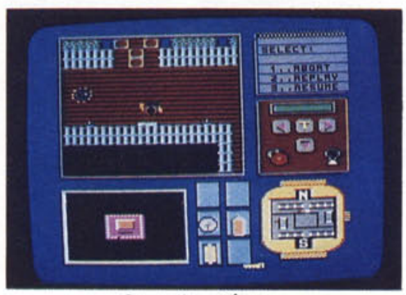
Low Blow



Ski or Die



Future Wars



Security Alert



Aquanaut

Interplay Productions
1575 Corporate Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

FUTURE WARS: What a recipe! Take a present day person, throw them into a time machine and hurl them back into the Middle Ages in "time" to discover a typical ultimate-threat-to-mankind scale galactic plot, complete with evil alien beings. Then, push that character through the paces of saving the human race. This is all a matter of course while involved in "Future Wars". The all-mouse interface is certainly simple to use, and the soundtrack is even available on CD! Amiga ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

Intracorp, Inc.
14160 SW 139th Court
Miami, FL 33186

SECURITY ALERT: The boss was very relieved to hear that no one in the office has what it takes to be a thief (but playing this game could certainly teach you). This real time game pits the player against over 1400 mazes filled with roving guards, hidden cameras, infrared beams and many other gadgets designed to create player paranoia. Options and challenges abound as players must really think like thieves to succeed! C64-128 ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Miles Computing, Inc.
5115 Douglas Fir Rd. #I
Calabasas, CA 91302

AQUANAUT: This is a classic arcade-maze game using the familiar assault against an underwater alien stronghold theme. Some strategy is involved in picking a route and, of course, there is the climactic confrontation with the ultimate-bad-guy at the end of it all. Amiga ($49.95) Circle Reader Service #12.

Sierra On-Line
Coarsegold, CA 93614

CONQUESTS OF CAMELOT: Sierra quality meets the Arthurian legend in the search for the Holy Grail. The storyline expertly weaves Christian and Celtic lore together into a fascinating mosaic of mystery and myth. As Arthur, players try to succeed where three knights before them have failed. Rescue the knights,

find the grail, and then, it's chalice time! The Mark Seibert soundtrack adds a marvelous Celtic ambiance. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

SORCERIAN: A hit Japanese arcade/role-playing game imported to the United States, "Sorcerian" just does not have the Sierra feel to it. While the variety of screens is nice, the Japanamation aspects of the game and the arcade-style graphics just don't measure up. The scope of the adventure might be there, but where is the computer role-player with the patience to sit through an epic arcade game? IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

Simulations Canada
P.O. Box 452
Bridgewater, Nova Scotia
Canada, B4V 2X6

BATTLE TANK, BARBAROSSA TO STALINGRAD: If you're familiar with Sim-Can wargames, you know that they don't offer anything in the way of graphics. Instead, all of the information is presented in text format with laminated map cards and grease pencils to help the player track the movement of forces. Set during the first two years of the Germany's World War II invasion of Russia, "Battle Tank" gives the player the feel for commanding small units on a grand tactical scale. Reports are received (often through static) from the various platoons and companies under a player's command and orders are issued to them. Information is presented via report screens, but with no graphics and sound, something seems to be lost on a tactical scale. IBM. Circle Reader Service #15.

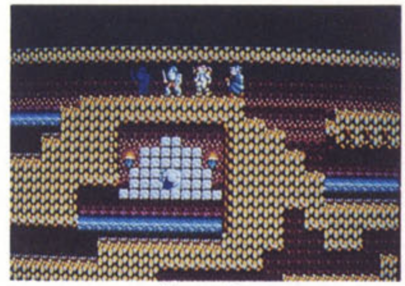
MALTA STORM: This is a nice wargame for those who enjoy in-depth strategy. Reviewing intelligence reports, setting national priorities and watching the grueling blow by blow losses of valuable ships and airplanes can really get a strategy-oriented wargamer going. Many options confront players each in each phase to provide an interesting and challenging game. IBM. Circle Reader Service #16.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.
675 Almanor Avenue
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

WATERLOO: This British import packs a lot of interesting features. While, technically, a *wargame*, it plays more like a "battlefield simulator". The player commands either the French or Anglo-Allied army on that fateful June day in 1815. As Napoleon or Wellington, dispatches are received from subordinate generals and orders are issued to them. The graphics offer the players a commander's-eye view of the battlefield. Orders are issued by typing in command words in simple sentences as the colored squares and rectangles of infantry, horses and cannons do their dance of death. IBM and Amiga ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #17.



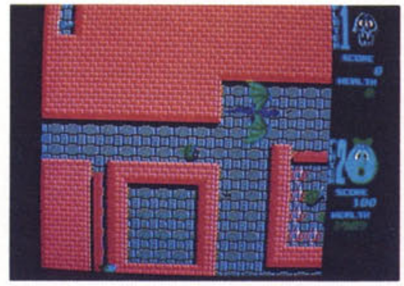
Conquest of Camelot



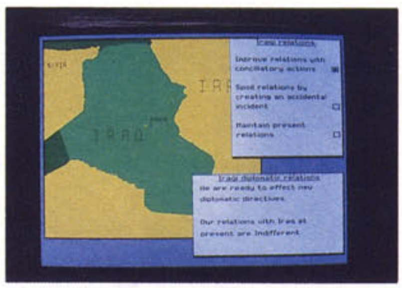
Sorcerian



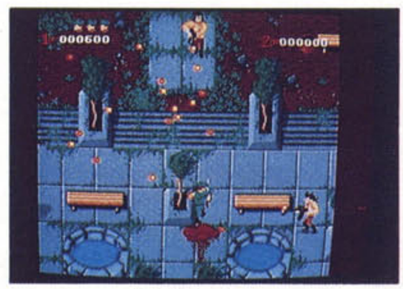
Waterloo



Puffy's Saga



Conflict



NY Warriors

UBI Soft
511, Sir Francis Drake Blvd. #C
Greenbrae, CA 94904

PUFFY'S SAGA: This cute little French game has you playing the role of a bouncing, pseudo "Pac Man" like ball (either the male Puffy or the female Puffyn) through a "Gauntlet" like multi-level arcade-style maze. Puffy opens his mouth and shoots arrows at the various monsters (many of whom are also right out of "Gauntlet II"). In fact, this bit of French software is similar enough to "Gauntlet" to feel familiar and comfortable with, yet different enough to be enjoyed for its own challenges and puzzles. Vive la difference! Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #18.

Virgin Games
18001 Cowan
Irvine, CA 92714

CONFLICT: Good morning, Prime Minister. It is January of 1997, and you are the new head of the Israeli government (the old head was assassinated—great job security, eh?). Your task is simple enough, force hostile neighboring states to collapse and, in so doing, preserve Israel. Military and political options are simply and clearly presented, but nuclear research is where it's at if you really want to threaten those diabolical neighboring countries. This is a fascinating game with a definite pro-Israeli bias. It plays here, but it won't play in Tehran. IBM ($14.99). Circle Reader Service #19.

NY WARRIORS: Yet another of the standard arcade warrior vs. the hordes shoot 'em up. There is plenty of violence as the player dodges the bullet(s), picks up better weapons, and generally rains down death and destruction upon the gangs of New York in an attempt to get to the World Trade Center before the evil terrorists set off the nuclear bomb planted therein. One of the new "Mega-Games" from Virgin, this game is a virtually intact replica of its Coin-Op Arcade version. One and two player options, requires 1 meg. Amiga ($49.99). Circle Reader Service #20.

CGW

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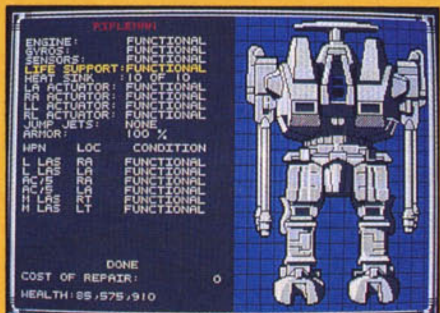


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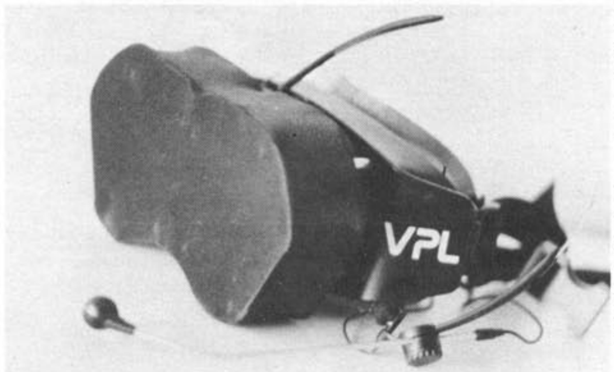
Game Technology

Continued from page 26

fingers flexing while the **Polhemus** tracker locates the gloves position three-dimensionally. In this way, the user can reach out and manipulate the objects of the "virtual reality".

Yet, some were not convinced that the touch of "reality" was complete enough. They wanted to give a tingling sensation at each fingertip to simulate the feeling of actually encountering an object. One company, **EXOS**, builds the *Dexterous Hand Master*. They have mounted computer controlled motors at each joint of this skeletal frame glove. The user places his or her hand in the glove and the computer program will cause those motors to push back and simulate the resistance one encounters when a solid object is touched or grasped. VPL has experimented with this forced-feedback approach, but has not made this standard equipment.

When (and if) these types of systems ever become consumer items, the possibilities for game play are incredible. No longer would role-players have to settle for a one-dimensional perspective of that fantasy environment. Instead, they would explore three-dimensional dungeons and castles. Science fiction gamers can take on the size, girth and attributes of an alien being and see the entire drama of the game unfold from the proper visual perspective. Wargamers can command an American Civil War gun battery from a three-dimensional ridge and experience the blinding confusion of counter-battery fire from a first person perspective. A gamer who wants to experience the swashbuckling world of the Three Musketeers might be able to hook up to a network and, via forced-feedback and a "virtual reality", fight it out with the Cardinal's guards, appropriately played by other gamers.



Consumerdom is probably more than a decade away on these products, but the possibilities are tantalizing enough that gamers can dream. In fact, one can almost imagine an amusement park to exploit these possibilities in the meantime, sort of a *Star Tours* meets "virtual reality" attraction. All we have to do is dream.

On the R.I.D. card provided opposite page 4, please rate the following games (if you have played them) and articles (if you have read them) by using a letter grade scale (I.e. A to F). Just rate the games as if you were an educator. As with the world of education, the scale will translate to:

A= Excellent

B= Above Average

C= Average

D= Below Average

F= Failure

If you wish, you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e. B+, B-, C+, C-, etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Conversions Received



Artura (Arcadia) Amiga

Batman (Data East) Amiga, C64, IBM

Block Out (California Dreams) IBM

Breach 2 (Omnitrend) Atari ST

FaceOff! (Gamestar) C64

Ferrari Formula One (EA) IBM

Grand Prix Circuit (Accolade) IIGS

Monday Night Football (Data East) C64

Omni-play Basketball (SportTime) IBM

Omni-play Horse Racing Stable Owners Module (SportTime) Amiga

Omni-play Horse Racing Track 2 Support Disk (SportTime) Amiga

Planet of Lust (Free Spirit) IBM

QIX (Taito) IBM

Search for the Titanic (Capstone) C64

Starflight (EA) Amiga, Mac

Super Hang-On (Data East) IBM

The Ultimate Casino Gambling Simulation (Capstone) Amiga, ApII, C64

Vigilante (Data East) C64

Demographics

(List the appropriate number)

1. What is your age ?
   - 1 = Under 14 years old
   - 2 = 14-17 years old
   - 3 = 18-20 years old
   - 4 = 21-30 years old
   - 5 = 31-35 years old
   - 6 = 36-40 years old
   - 7 = 41-50 years old
   - 8 = 51+ years old
2. What machine(s) do you play games on?

   (List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in decending order of use).
   - 1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
   - 2 = Amiga
   - 3 = Apple 8 bit
   - 4 = Apple IIgs
   - 5 = Atari ST
   - 6 = Atari 8 bit
   - 7 = C-64/128
   - 8 = Macintosh
   - 9 = Other (specify)
3. How much time do you typically spend playing computer games each week?
   - 1 = Less than 2 hours
   - 2 = 2-5 hours
   - 3 = 6-10 hours
   - 4 = 11-20 hours
   - 5 = 21-30 hours
   - 6 = 31+ hours

RID #72 Questions

Games

4. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
5. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
6. Sim City (Maxis)
7. M-1 Tank Platoon (Microprose)
8. Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
9. Populous (Electronic Arts)
10. Starflight 2 (Electronic Arts)
11. Lords of Rising Sun (Cinemaware)
12. Red Storm Rising (Microprose)
13. TV Sports Basketball (Cinemaware)
14. Loom (Lucasfilm)
15. Ultima VI (Origin)
16. Conquests of Camelot (Sierra)
17. DragonStrike (SSI)
18. Codename: Iceman (Sierra)
19. Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon (Microprose)
20. Second Front (SSI)
21. StarTrek: The Next Generation: Transinium Challenge (Simon & Schuster)
22. Gunboat (Accolade)
23. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Konami)
24. The Hound of Shadow (EA)
25. Dragon's Lair (Bethesda)
26. Action Stations (Conflict Analytics)
27. Tournament Golf (CSN)
28. Indianapolis 500 (EA)
29. Batman (Data East)
30. Star Trek: Transinium Challenge (Simon & Schuster)
31. 2088: The Cryllan Mission (Victory)
32. Dec. Battles of the ACW: Vol.1 (SSG)
33. Pursue The Pennant PC Baseball (PTP)
34. Strat-O-Matic Baseball (Strat-O-Matic)
35. Malta Storm (SimCan)
36. Knights of Legend (Origin)
37. Task Force (Fanfare)
38. Bruce Lee Lives (Software Toolworks)
39. Future Wars (Interplay)
40. Puffy's Saga (UbiSoft)

Articles

41. Keeping Up With Jones Sneak
42. Game Technology Feature
43. Over There
44. Ultima VI Opinion & Hints
45. Code-Name: Iceman Review
46. Test Lab Report
47. Balance of Planet Review
48. Second Front Review
49. Decision at Gettysburg Review
50. Iron Lord Review

Questions

51. Where do you usually purchase your software?
    - a) computer store,
    - b) software specialty store (Egghead, Babbages, Waldensoft, Software, Etc., Electronics Boutique),
    - c) mail order discount house,
    - d) retail department store (Sears, K-Mart, etc.),
    - e) toy store, or
    - f) book store.



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SimCity
SimCity
GAME OF 1 THE YEAR
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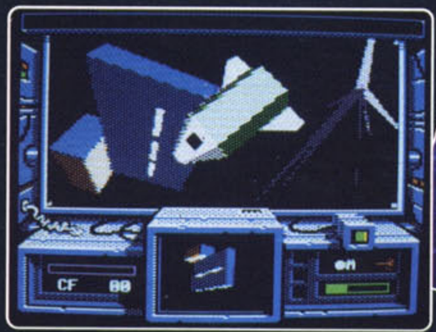
5000 YEARS OF ADVENTURE!

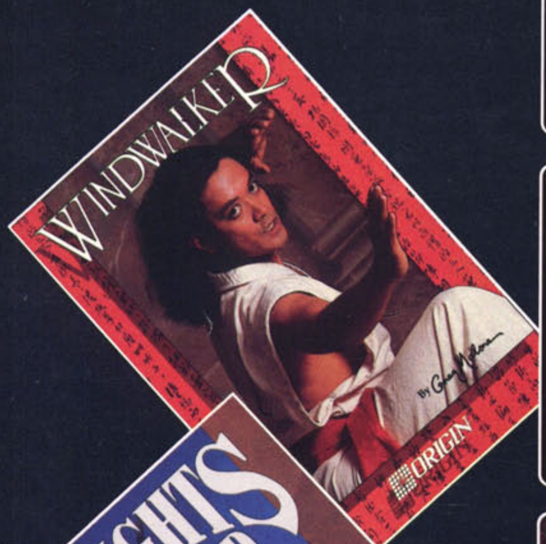


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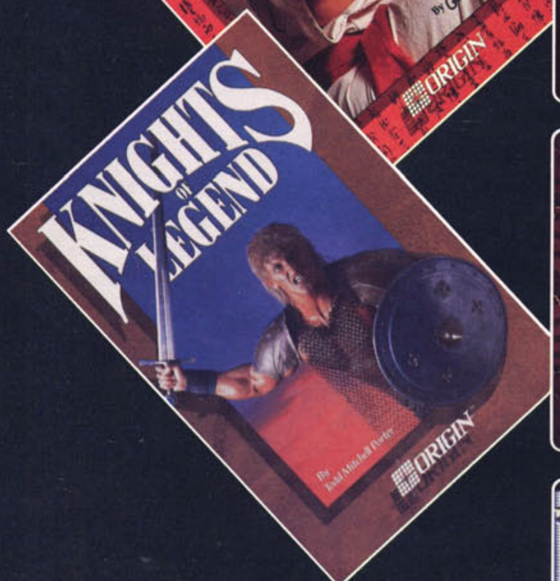


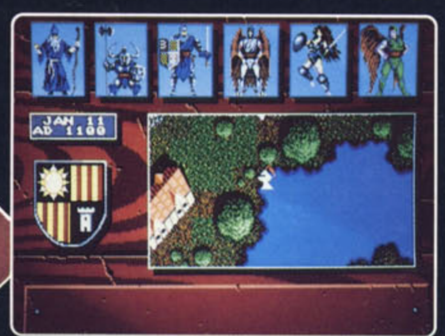


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